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First Session, 41st Parliament

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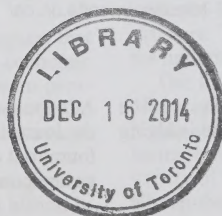
Première session, 41^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 9 December 2014

Mardi 9 décembre 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 décembre 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'INFRASTRUCTURE AU SERVICE DE L'EMPLOI ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Mr. Naqvi, on behalf of Mr. Duguid, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 6, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, who is also the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I will also be sharing my time with the member from Durham and the member from Trinity–Spadina.

Speaker, thank you for recognizing me to speak on the second reading leadoff on Bill 6, which is the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. I'm really proud to stand in the Legislature and speak on this very important bill.

I'm sure all members of this House will recognize that building modern infrastructure is key to the economic growth of our province but also for the long-term prosperity of this great province. Building infrastructure means that we are growing our economy and, at the same time, creating good-paying jobs for Ontarians.

That is why—I say this very proudly—our government has invested since 2003 more than \$100 billion in building infrastructure across our province, in things that we all rely on, things that we, as Ontarians, all need in our communities—for example, schools, colleges, community health centres, hospitals; community centres, ice hockey rinks—you name it, Speaker—things that really enhance our quality of life. That's why that \$100-billion investment since 2003 has been a very significant contribution to ensuring that we do have a modern infrastructure in the province of Ontario.

That is why, moving forward, we are going to be investing over \$130 billion in public infrastructure over the next 10 years in our province, again making sure that we keep pace with the building of critical, necessary, important infrastructure that will help our province grow. To me, of course, public transit and transportation infrastructure very much comes to mind, a very important component as the population of our province grows, to ensure that we've got that kind of infrastructure available in our communities.

This investment of \$130 billion in public infrastructure over the next 10 years, Speaker, not only means that we are building much-needed infrastructure in every corner of the province, but it will also support over 110,000 jobs annually. That is an incredible opportunity that exists for our province, that by investing in infrastructure, not only are we meeting the needs of our communities but also creating good-paying jobs for Ontarians in our communities.

Experts agree that investing in infrastructure is an investment in our economy. An April 2013 report from the Conference Board of Canada found that each dollar invested in public infrastructure in Ontario raises the gross domestic product by \$1.14 in the near term. That's a very significant accelerator—accelerator—in terms of the dividend on the investment. I know I slipped a little bit on that word. In addition, our own studies show that the returns on this dollar grow to \$3.10 in the long term while supporting jobs and facilitating private investment.

Bill 6, if passed, would require our government and future governments to regularly prepare long-term infrastructure plans, so that we're really following an evidence-based plan in terms of the building of our infrastructure. This will ensure that all governments recognize the importance of long-term planning.

The Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act is part of our plan to continue to build a well-educated and highly skilled workforce. The proposed legislation would increase the opportunities for apprenticeships for a wide variety of trades; another, I think, important initiative that all members will agree that we need to engage in to make sure that more apprentices are getting opportunities to engage in trades. Again, they are very much part and parcel of that new economy, that highly skilled, highly educated economy that we are building in our great province.

In conclusion, Speaker, I want to say that this bill really represents our government's priorities of building Ontario up by investing in people's talents and skills, building new public infrastructure and creating a

dynamic business climate. I'm hopeful that all members will support this very important bill, because this really goes to the core of building our communities. Every single one of us knows of infrastructure projects that we have worked on in the past that are key to the community's well-being, and we know of projects that will help grow our communities, not only in terms of the quality of life that we enjoy but also the jobs they bring.

Speaker, with your permission, I would like to now turn it over to the parliamentary assistance to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore. Thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to continue on the excellent introduction that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services gave. I'm pleased to rise in the House for the second reading of Bill 6, the proposed Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2014.

Since taking office, our government has embarked on a program of comprehensive reinvestment to put Ontario's infrastructure back onto a solid footing. Bill 6 is about securing the accomplishments of the past decade and applying the expertise we've gained as we move forward with the next generation of infrastructure investment. At its core, Bill 6 is about enshrining in legislation solid principles for long-term infrastructure planning in Ontario. We want to continue building up our province with long-term infrastructure planning that is strategic, evidence-based and addresses the priorities that Ontarians share.

0910

C'est un plaisir pour moi de m'adresser à l'Assemblée législative pour la deuxième lecture du projet de loi 6, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'infrastructure au service de l'emploi et de la prospérité.

Depuis le début de son mandat, le gouvernement a lancé un vaste programme de réinvestissement afin de consolider les infrastructures ontariennes. Le projet de loi 6 vise à protéger les acquis de la dernière décennie et à faire valoir notre nouveau savoir-faire grâce à une nouvelle génération d'investissement dans les infrastructures.

Son objectif principal est de fixer dans la loi de solides principes quant à la planification à long terme des infrastructures. Nous souhaitons bâtir notre province grâce à une planification à long terme des infrastructures qui soit stratégique, qui s'appuie sur des données concrètes et qui réponde aux priorités communes des Ontariennes et Ontariens.

I see infrastructure investment as one of the most direct forms of economic development that any government can engage in. Of course, there are thousands of jobs created by the projects themselves, but it's far more than that. Modern, efficient infrastructure is literally the foundation upon which a modern economy is built. It enables goods to move efficiently to market, provides for timely commutes to work, and underpins our quality of

life. These factors are critical to our ability to attract business investment.

The challenge of renewing Ontario's infrastructure is immense. As a province, for too long we relied on infrastructure built in the post-war period. Since 2003, our government has invested nearly \$100 billion to modernize Ontario's infrastructure. Major progress has been made across the province, and we need to continue this momentum.

Our 2014 budget committed to investing more than \$130 billion in public infrastructure over the next 10 years. As part of this commitment, Ontario will be investing \$29 billion over the next 10 years for public transit, transportation and other priority infrastructure across the province. As you well know, Mr. Speaker, this will consist of up to \$15 billion to support transit investment in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, and an additional \$14 billion will support investment in roads, bridges, transit and other critical infrastructure needs throughout the rest of the province.

In addition, the province is taking steps to ensure our health care sector continues to offer quality service while protecting the sustainability of the system for future generations. Ontario plans to invest more than \$11 billion in capital grants to major hospital expansions or redevelopment projects over the next 10 years. This will support more than 40 projects that are under construction or in various stages of planning, and includes the construction or expansion of surgical and cancer treatment services.

Ontario is also building better places to learn. Our government is making investments in education and post-secondary infrastructure, including more than \$11 billion over the next 10 years in capital grants to school boards across the province. Capital investments will help build new schools to address growth pressures in areas such as Milton, Brampton, Barrhaven and Ancaster, to name just a few communities. We've committed more than \$4 billion over the next 10 years to help address school repair needs. Funding will target critical needs and improve school conditions. It will support a safe and healthy learning environment for students and will modernize classrooms as well as help school boards reduce operating costs associated with aging infrastructure.

Mr. Speaker, I shared all of this background with you and with members of the House because I wanted to illustrate the scale and complexity of Ontario's program of infrastructure investments. Through working closely with our partners over the last decade or so, we've established a solid track record of comprehensive infrastructure renewal. This experience and base of knowledge is reflected in Building Together, Ontario's first long-term infrastructure plan, which was released in 2011.

Bill 6 moves us forward from this position of strength. Under the proposed legislation, the government will be required to prepare a long-term infrastructure plan that covers at least 10 years. The first plan would be presented in the Legislature within three years, with subsequent

plans presented at least every five years thereafter. The rigour of this process will ensure that the needs of our changing province are reflected in our infrastructure planning.

Bill 6 sets out a framework and a series of guiding principles for infrastructure investment that would make our economy and our society stronger. These are principles the Ontario government and the broader public service—for example, municipalities, school boards and hospitals—should consider when making infrastructure decisions.

Although there are a number of principles listed in the bill, I'd like to highlight a few of them today.

Principle number 1: Infrastructure planning should be done on a long-term basis. We're proposing plans for a minimum of 10 years but, in fact, they could be for much longer. Furthermore, in establishing the long-term infrastructure plan, the government will take into consideration the demographic and economic trends in Ontario.

Principle number 2: Infrastructure planning should take into account fiscal plans and budgets. We're looking to find the correct balance here. Infrastructure planning needs to be conducted on long-term horizons, but in pragmatic terms, we know that circumstances change and plans need to be adapted. Our goal is continual improvement and to ensure that infrastructure investments are pragmatic and reflect prudent investment principles.

Principle number 3: Infrastructure planning and investment should promote economic competitiveness, productivity, job creation and training. We know that our infrastructure investments support an average of 110,000 jobs each year in construction and related industries, but let's look further to ensure that every dollar spent is reaping the maximum benefit for Ontario's competitiveness, productivity, job creation and training. Modern, efficient infrastructure is one of the key factors that businesses use when deciding where to invest. Business decision-makers need to know that employees and supplies can move efficiently into the workplace, and that finished products can be sent to the marketplace. We want to ensure that economic development potential is optimized for all infrastructure projects.

Principle number 4: Infrastructure planning should foster innovation and create opportunities to use innovation. Innovations encompass technologies, services and practices that enhance the overall value of infrastructure development. This will be of particular value where we can use innovations developed right here in Ontario. For example, Ontario has developed significant expertise through its made-in-Ontario alternative financing and procurement model. We'd like to see the lessons and best practices learned from that model applied where applicable in the long-term infrastructure planning process.

Principle number 5: Project priorities should be identified and should support plans. This principle is about ensuring long-term infrastructure plans properly align with existing plans or strategies at the provincial and municipal level. Let's ensure our major infrastructure investments are coordinated and complementary.

Examples of plans and strategies that would need to be considered could include: growth plans under the Places to Grow Act; municipal water sustainability plans submitted under the Water Opportunities Act; and certainly transportation plans adopted under the Metrolinx Act.

Principle number 6: Infrastructure planning should be evidence-based and transparent. Our goal is that investment decisions are made in an open, transparent manner, based on publicly available information. Wherever possible, information that relates to infrastructure planning should be shared between Ontario and the broader public sector. We need to be working together.

Principle number 7: Planning should minimize impact on the environment and infrastructure should be resilient to climate change. This would involve ensuring projects include features to maintain local biological diversity and take account of extreme weather conditions.

0920

Finally, Mr. Speaker, principal number 8: Infrastructure planning and investment should ensure the provision of core public services. In particular, Ontario priorities such as health care and education should be reflected in long-term infrastructure plans.

In addition to the principles I've outlined, the proposed Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act includes criteria that would be used by the government to prioritize proposed projects, and that's about making the greatest use of available resources.

When evaluating infrastructure proposals, the government should consider whether the infrastructure asset is already planned for in a provincial or municipal plan or strategy; whether related capital costs and operating costs expected to rise over the useful life of the infrastructure asset have been accounted for; and whether there's been an assessment of the project's anticipated long-term return on investment.

In particular, decisions would be informed by an assessment of a project's ability to stimulate productivity and economic competitiveness; maximize tax assessment and tax base growth; support any other public policy goals of the Ontario government or of any affected municipalities; and provide a foundation for further infrastructure projects.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 6 also includes provisions to promote excellence in the design of public infrastructure. My background is as an architect, so obviously this is something that I feel very strongly and passionately about; and this is something that Bill 6 will be addressing, which is very important.

Bill 6 will require that, where practicable, architects and design experts will be involved in certain new government-owned or -funded infrastructure projects over a prescribed cost threshold. The design excellence provision would apply to certain signature projects where it makes sense to emphasize design, but not to things like culverts and fire hydrants.

This is about bringing the right expertise to the table so that Ontario can benefit from enhanced infrastructure design. Our goal is to deliver signature infrastructure

projects that become worldwide beacons for Ontario-based design excellence: structures and places that will make our communities more vibrant, more attractive and further enhance our position as a leading global jurisdiction.

We need look no further than current projects like Union Station, our Pan/Parapan Am facilities and even some of our transit stations designed by local and international star architects. Many of our cultural institutions are world-renowned for their architecture, and our post-secondary campuses are among the most attractive in North America, if not the world.

Design does matter, and it does add value. Good design has been demonstrated to lower long-term operating costs by improving functionality. Good design can also help attract and retain talent and capital and contribute to our overall economic growth.

We anticipate that consultations would be held with industry stakeholders to determine the appropriate cost threshold for this design excellence provision.

Many of you will already know that the proposed legislation was first introduced in the last Parliament, as Bill 141, and was referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills. With the election being called in May 2014, the former bill died on the order paper. However, that process brought forward some constructive comments. The design excellence provision is one of the areas where we received some very useful feedback, particularly from Ontario's engineering community.

Our government acknowledges the important role that engineers play in good infrastructure design, and also as a key component of Ontario's highly skilled workforce. We look forward to working with the engineering community to ensure that the importance of their work is fully reflected within Bill 6.

We've talked about the connection between infrastructure investment and strengthening our economy. We can also use infrastructure development as a way to further enhance the skills of our workforce. Bill 6 would require that a specified number of apprentices would be employed in the construction or—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order?

Mr. John Vanthof: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): A quorum is now present.

Back to the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I always enjoy an audience.

We can also use infrastructure development as a way to further enhance the skills of our workforce. Bill 6 would require that a specified number of apprentices would be employed in construction or maintenance of certain infrastructure assets. This measure would gen-

erate increased opportunities for people interested in pursuing a career in the skilled trades, while increasing apprenticeship opportunities to ensure the province has the skilled workers it needs.

Some have argued that setting apprenticeship quotas will increase costs. I would respond that ensuring that the province has the skilled workers it needs outweighs the cost of hiring apprentices. I commend firms that invest in their workers and offer apprenticeships. This is something we want to encourage.

This provision would also support Ontario's Youth Jobs Strategy. We have a situation today where too many young people face great challenges in finding stable, well-paying jobs. Meanwhile, there are shortages in many of the skilled technical trades. The skills training and apprenticeship provision in Bill 6 is a smart and strategic way to help close that gap. We look forward to continued collaboration with stakeholders, including those from the construction industry, to ensure the provision is structured in a way that effectively promotes skills training and apprenticeships.

As we work to further refine Bill 6, we'd like to consult with the municipal sector on the best way to integrate municipal asset management plans into Ontario's long-term infrastructure planning. Asset management is essential for strategic, evidence-based and long-term infrastructure planning, which is what this legislation is about.

Since August 2012, the province has been implementing the Municipal Infrastructure Strategy. Asset management is a cornerstone of that strategy, and municipalities have made significant progress in addressing their core infrastructure needs and developing asset management plans. Under the strategy, any municipality seeking provincial capital funding is required to prepare a detailed asset management plan and show how its proposed project fits within it.

As a former municipal councillor, I do see municipalities as key partners in working with the province to build stronger communities. We look forward to hearing from municipalities on this point and to working with stakeholders, including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. The proposed Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act offers a valuable opportunity to further align how we work together. We look forward to exploring this as the legislative process moves forward.

Our government views Bill 6 as a landmark piece of legislation in helping to shape Ontario's future. We look forward to working with all our stakeholders to ensure we get it right.

0930

Mr. Speaker, members of the House, fostering a dynamic and innovative economic climate that allows businesses to thrive is key to our government's economic plan. This proposed legislation would ensure that current and future governments regularly prepare long-term infrastructure plans and continue to improve how Ontario's infrastructure needs are prioritized. Bill 6 would provide a framework that could help better align infra-

structure investments with Ontario's economic development needs and the priorities that Ontarians share.

Through mandated long-term infrastructure planning we can ensure every dollar invested brings the best possible outcome for strong, sustainable communities, a fair society and a vibrant economy. We look forward to constructive debate on this important legislation.

I will now be sharing my time with the member for Durham.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now recognize the member from Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to allow me to deliver my inaugural speech and address during this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Is there consent for the member from Durham to deliver his inaugural speech? Agreed.

Continue: The member from Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My name is Granville Anderson. I am the newly elected MPP representing the great riding of Durham, a community that I've called home for over 27 years. I'm not so new anymore; it's six months in, but I still consider myself a new member.

It would be remiss of me if I didn't pay homage to my predecessor Mr. John O'Toole, whom you well know around this place. He served in this Legislature for almost 20 years, and he served the people of Durham well during his tenure as the MPP for our great riding of Durham.

I am proud to stand here before you as I have had an interest in politics since before I was old enough to remember. I've always had a desire to make people's lives better. To serve in the Ontario Legislature has always been a dream of mine, and a dream that finally came true on June 12, 2014.

My family has always been supportive of my political endeavours; I'm also thankful to my children Earl and Samantha and my parents for their support and their belief in me as I pursue my passion. During my time and during my community involvement—I have been a school board trustee for over 12 years in addition to my day job as a mediator—there were many nights when I was not home until well after midnight. I hope I can make them as proud of me as I am of them.

For a little background on my road here: It was only through the hard work and determination of our volunteers that we were able to pull off a victory in Durham—a victory many people did not think could be done, but we proved them wrong. I knocked on as many doors as I was able to and often received a very warm welcome, even though the riding has been held by the Progressive Conservatives from what seemed to be time immemorial. The central theme of the residents' comments was that they wanted change, and change was what they got.

It would take too long to list all of the dedicated volunteers who helped us, but I'll list a few: my campaign manager, Justin MacLean, who is all of 24 years

old, along with Ian McMillan and Karina Smith, who is all of 19 years old—and yes, we did have one senior statesperson. Her name is Susan Stuart; she was the glue that held us all together.

My campaign was based on young people—dozens of them. We worked hard and we were committed. They believed in me and I believed in them, and that's why I'm here today. So I am forever grateful to them.

A particular highlight of my campaign, and something that our team prided ourselves on, was the number of young people—I will reiterate—who got involved. Most of our office staff was under 30, as I alluded to earlier, and many under 25. I've always been inspired by the capacity of young people to work towards their passions, and they continue to amaze me.

One of my goals is to get more young people involved in the political process. Durham is growing quickly, in large part due to younger families. By engaging youth in my campaign, I believe we were able to energize the youth of our riding and get them to vote, ultimately coming together in my electoral success.

This transition of becoming an MPP is a welcomed one, but I have to tell you, I will surely miss serving as a school board trustee. For over 12 years, I had the honour to serve on the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board. In that role, I met many wonderful people who are as passionate as I am about education and giving our young people the best possible start.

During my tenure on the board, I served for a number of years as board vice-chair and as board chair. I was able to meet trustees from all over the province, and I share their passion for education. Education is the key to success and the key to all doors for our young people. That has always been something that I strive to bring forward, and to empower young people with the ability—to try and create the ability and provide them with the skills to be the best they can be or that they could be and can be in society. I believe I have done that or shared some part of doing that.

Allow me to tell you a little bit more about my riding. Durham is a diverse mix of rural and urban land. Throughout our riding, many commute into Toronto every day, as I currently do because I enjoy sitting with my constituents and having conversation with them as they express their concerns and trying to assist them as best I can as their representative for the riding.

We also have a good economic mix of industries, including energy and infrastructure. The three municipalities that make up our riding have an incredible character and are distinct and unique in their own ways.

Clarington is bound by Lake Ontario to the south and the Oak Ridges moraine in the north, with many rivers and creeks running between them. The municipality of Port Hope lies to the east and the city of Oshawa to the west.

While a significant majority of our 90,000 residents live in Courtice, Bowmanville or Newcastle, more than 18,000 make their homes in one of a dozen smaller com-

munities, communities such as Blackstock, Nestleton, Orono and so forth—communities that make up the municipality.

Many count farms as their home, with over 400 farms in Clarington alone. The riding of Durham has probably roughly 1,000 farms between Durham, Scugog and Uxbridge. This allows for a thriving field-to-table food sector. And while the farming industry plays a key role in Clarington's economy, the municipality is also home to many other industries, not the least of which is the energy sector.

Clarington is home to Ontario Power Generation's Darlington nuclear plant. Darlington is a key employer in my riding and plays a key role in Ontario's economy, helping to ensure a reliable supply of energy to meet the province's demands.

Around Darlington, we are currently seeing a growing cluster of energy-related businesses, which are a most welcome addition to the riding.

0940

To the north of Clarington lies Scugog, with a population of roughly 21,000. The Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation make their home here as part of the Ojibway nation, one of the largest native groups in Canada. Scugog has many small communities, but its main centre is the beautiful town of Port Perry. Nestled along Lake Scugog, the municipality is a version of our country writ small, with thriving agriculture and tourism industries, a lot of history and a lot to look forward to.

The member from Burlington said yesterday that Burlington is the most beautiful spot in this country. I take issue with that: I believe that the riding of Durham is.

To the west of Scugog there is Uxbridge, found in the beautiful valley along the northern slope of the Oak Ridges moraine. The township has a population of about 11,000, with a surrounding array of hamlets and farmland. While not large in population, Uxbridge is anything but small when it comes to its arts, entertainment, recreation, culture and spirit of community.

As you have just heard, ours is a very diverse riding, with each area having different levels and types of needs when it comes to our provincial government. In Clarington, we want to bring the GO train to Bowmanville, so that the many commuters at the east anchor of the GTA have accessible transit. I also want to see the Bowmanville hospital maintained and expanded, so that our residents can receive their health care in their own community.

In Scugog, I want to ensure that we have bridges fixed and that our roadways and infrastructure are well taken care of. I want to work with the new mayor, Tom Rowett, to ensure that the tourism industry thrives, and with Chief Kelly LaRocca on the Great Blue Heron Charity Casino.

In Uxbridge, I want to solve the culvert issue, help with their historical sites and ensure that they are well-integrated and that their voices are heard in our region.

My larger goals revolve around youth employment. I am so proud to be parliamentary assistant to Minister

MacCharles; together we can work to maintain a bright future for our youngest Ontarians.

I am also passionate about the environment, especially in terms of our rural communities. Just last week, I introduced a motion in the House encouraging the Minister of the Environment to adopt a plan to deal with commercial fill and the dangers that its pollutants pose for our watersheds. The residents of my riding are concerned about their safety, and I will always intend to put good policy ahead of politics.

It is my pleasure to represent Durham, and I will do so to the best of my ability. This will mean doing what I feel is the best thing an MPP can do: putting the needs of the riding ahead of politics, and ensuring that I do all that I can to have my constituents' voices heard at Queen's Park.

I will continue to do this by advocating for the needs of my community: better roads, better bridges, better schools, better hospitals; making sure that the services are there for our most vulnerable, our elderly and our young children; making sure that the safety of our children is protected; and making sure that we have proper transit services in the riding. That's why it's essential and crucial that the GO train come to Bowmanville, so that our commuters and our community can grow and we can increase and better the economy for the people of my riding.

I thank you for this opportunity to tell you a little bit about my community and a little bit about myself, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to respond briefly to the three Liberal members who spoke: the government House leader initially; the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who I gather is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure; and the member for Durham. I want to compliment the member for Durham on his inaugural speech. He was very eloquent talking about his reasons for running and his commitment to his constituents. He deserves congratulations on his election, certainly, and on his remarks this morning.

I must point out, though, that it seems rather strange—although the standing orders don't preclude it—that the minister responsible for the bill, who actually introduced the bill at first reading on July 7, the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, who is actually given responsibility for carriage of this legislation, didn't move second reading and we haven't had a chance to hear from him. So I would hope that over the course of this second reading debate of Bill 6, we do have a chance to hear from the minister to explain why this bill has been introduced and to explain his justification for it.

Of course, as we know, the government has a larger legislative agenda, not just Bill 6, and the government is quite proud of it. Yesterday, the government introduced

Bill 56 and Bill 57: Bill 56, standing in the name of the Associate Minister of Finance, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, and Bill 57, standing in the name of the Minister of Finance, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

I would have expected that the parliamentary assistant to the minister might have touched on explaining something about what the government's intentions are with respect to this bill because we're concerned, and certainly the Canadian Federation of Independent Business is very, very concerned, about the cost of this and how employers are going to afford it. In fact, it's a substantial reduction in the take-home pay of workers, too, at a time when few will be able to afford it. I'd ask the parliamentary assistant to address that, if he indeed responds on behalf of the three Liberal members who spoke.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to take this opportunity to make some comments in response to my neighbour and the member from Durham on his inaugural address this morning. The member from Durham and I, of course, share a border, and we also have been sharing the same community circuit, so I have been pleased to have the opportunity to get to know him in the community capacity. I live just on the border with the Durham riding, so when I look out my window, I get to see both Oshawa and his stomping ground.

I'm pleased to know that his priorities are in line with my own in terms of the environment and education with his years of being of a trustee and serving his community. But to prioritize education—that's good to know that we're on the same page there.

Also, I'd like to congratulate the member both for making his inaugural speech six months after election, but also for his plan for commercial fill and for taking that responsible environmental step.

Recently, we had the opportunity to cross paths on the holiday train, and I look forward to more of those opportunities in our community. The member and I both were perhaps unexpected elections. We're going to see a lot of change in our neighbouring ridings and certainly in the farming, food and energy industries. There's a lot to do to partner there.

Congratulations on your inaugural speech. I look forward to hearing far more about that. Also, I'm glad that he'll be representing the communities that I have a lot of connection with. Udonia: My father had lived there for a long time. It's a snug, lovely little community, and I'm glad to know it will be well represented—and Uxbridge, the various towns. We have a great sense of community. Anyway, congratulations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to stand up this morning and to pay tribute to the member for Durham and thank him for putting his name on a

ballot in the last election. We're very fortunate to have someone with his credentials and someone with his passion. What a refreshing speech he delivered this morning.

0950

We know that he's very involved with youth, and we need that expertise to complete our team. I had a lot of these youth helping me in my campaign, and I think that the member from Durham sees his role as a mentor for these youth in his community.

I was very touched by the member from Durham describing his community. You see the passion and dream that he has for his community, a beautiful community that represents—it's almost a microcosm of Canada. It represents cities, small towns, rural communities and villages.

He brings to the table and he brings to the House wide knowledge about Ontario and also his experience coming to the House as a trustee—of course, it's very much related to youth also—and also as a mediator. God knows that we need this expertise in the House when we present a bill and we need the support of the House to support it.

So thank you very much for coming. We are very pleased to have you on our team. Congratulations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to commend the member from Durham for his inaugural remarks. I always enjoy hearing all of the inaugural remarks from the different members. You learn a little bit about their riding and you learn a little bit about them that you didn't know from their biography. It's always a very important time when you're able to stand and deliver in this House and talk a little bit about your riding, about yourself, about your family, about your volunteers and about how you got here. We all got here in different ways, in different boats, but we're all in the same boat now, and we should all be rowing in the same direction. Hopefully we can do a lot of that over the next three and a half years, as time goes on.

I'm also really happy that he paid tribute to the former member from Durham. He got to be a good friend of mine: John O'Toole. He's probably watching this morning. I know he watches the House quite regularly. He did an excellent job, as the new member from Durham said.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, maybe he's watching from Florida on C-SPAN or something.

Anyway, I would like to pay tribute to the new member from Durham for mentioning his predecessor. It's always nice when the new members come in and pay tribute to the hard work their predecessors did. I think we all acknowledge that. We all know that there was someone before us who built the road and set the path in place for all of us, as we follow them and hope to serve as honourably and as well as they did.

It's great to hear your personal story about your work with trustees on the school board and other activities.

Everyone brings something different to this House. I think that's what makes this place unique.

Again, I acknowledge the member from Durham and congratulate him and welcome him here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Durham for a final two-minute summary.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I wish to thank the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, the member from Ottawa–Vanier, the member from Sarnia–Lambton and, of course, the member from Oshawa, my friend and my neighbour. She forgot to mention that we share the same dry cleaner as well.

It's a pleasure to serve the people of the wonderful riding of Durham. It's very diverse. It does reflect Ontario in every sense of the word. We have lakes and rivers and farms and industry and nuclear plants. Actually, my riding also has three hospitals. We have one in Uxbridge, one in Port Perry and one in Bowmanville. They serve the community well.

I hope that over the next—well, not four years anymore—three and a half years to continue to serve and continue to build up my community and create employment and make sure our seniors have the care they deserve, make sure that PSWs are there for them and make sure that our schools continue to grow and our economy continues to grow.

Hopefully at the end of four years I'll be able to get the GO train as well to Bowmanville. That was one of the key components during the campaign; everybody wanted GO train services in Bowmanville, and that's something I am working towards. With the help of my colleagues, we'll be able to accomplish that.

Again, I wish to thank the members of this House for their kind remarks. Hopefully we can work together to build a better Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Before we continue with debate, it gives me great pleasure to recognize, in the members' gallery this morning, Jennifer Mossop, member of the 38th Parliament representing Stoney Creek. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Further debate.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to participate in the second reading debate on Bill 6, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2014.

Before I begin, I want to express my own words of welcome, on behalf of the official opposition, to Jennifer Mossop for being here—the former member for Stoney Creek. She served with distinction in this Legislature a few years ago. While she was here, she introduced a private member's bill to recognize Lincoln Alexander Day. That's a bill that I was pleased to pick up, working with, actually, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek as well as the member for Scarborough–Rouge River, as a co-sponsored bill. It was passed into law late last year.

Recently the House of Commons passed a similar bill, and forevermore Lincoln Alexander Day will be

acknowledged across Canada. We're really pleased about that. That was Jennifer's bill at the start, and she deserves acknowledgement and credit for the idea. I'm glad she's here today.

If you'll indulge me, Speaker, I have some other good news. My mother-in-law, Mrs. Allie McCabe, is celebrating her 80th birthday today. I was able to phone her this morning. She doesn't watch this channel, by the way, unlike John O'Toole. I'm pretty sure—in fact, I'm certain—that she's not watching; she knows I'm speaking. At the same time, I certainly wanted to let the members know.

My wife's mother lives with us, actually, through the winter months and, increasingly, into the fall and spring. She has a cottage near Arnstein, Ontario, where she grew up. I know that the member for Parry Sound–Muskoka often speaks about the Argyle area, which is on Highway 522 between Highway 11 and Highway 69. That's where Allie grew up. She raised a family of six children, growing up mostly in Dresden, Ontario, and then retired in the Arthur area when I first met my wife, Lisa. We're hoping for a really nice family get-together over Christmas to celebrate her 80th birthday, and we wish her all the best.

I would be remiss if I didn't also point out that one of my constituency assistants, Karen Thomas, is also celebrating a birthday today. I haven't had a chance to call her. I know that she doesn't watch the legislative channel either because she works in my riding office and she's too busy, but at the same time I wanted to wish her all the very best for a happy birthday too.

We have Bill 6 before us today. As I said earlier, I'm looking forward to hearing from the Minister of Economic Development over the course of second reading debate on this bill. I hope the government doesn't try to ram this through without giving us an opportunity to hear what he has to say about it and why he thinks it's an important bill and why he has introduced it. But certainly our party has the opportunity to debate this bill, and we're pleased to have that chance.

Over the course of the previous round of initial speeches by the government members—I've mentioned Bill 56 and Bill 57, these two pieces of legislation that were first introduced yesterday: Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, and Bill 57, An Act to create a framework for pooled registered pension plans and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Of course, as I said earlier, we're really discussing Bill 6, but I have to, again, point out that the government legislative agenda is not just one bill. The government would argue that there's a significant number of bills that have some commonality, and they're all interrelated in terms of the government's program and its plans and its budgetary framework.

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Clearly, Bill 56 is integral to what they're planning in terms of long-term infrastructure. The government, with Bill 6, of course, is suggesting that they're going to bring

forward a long-term infrastructure plan, and I assume that Bill 56 and its passage is intended largely to pay for the long-term infrastructure plan.

As we know, Bill 56 is short—it's only six pages—but it requires the government to introduce the pension plan no later than January 1, 2017. It seems strange that the government would pass a bill to require it to do something that it has promised to do. Maybe that says something about the government's promises, but this bill would require them to keep their promise. They want to pass that bill through the House to require them to keep their promise.

Section 2 of the bill reads as follows: "Obligation to create administrative entity," and then it goes down to 2(1)4:

"Holding contributions: The administrative entity shall hold the contributions, and any accruals from the investments, in trust for the members and other beneficiaries of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. The contributions and the accruals shall not form part of the Consolidated Revenue Fund."

That's a very important point, because the government is saying that the money it collects from employers and employees, that they're telling people is going to be set aside as a retirement pension plan, as an Ontario pension plan—separate and distinct from the Canada Pension Plan—that that money will be set aside and will not just go into the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

However, we don't see any provision in the bill that would require a complete arm's-length relationship on the part of those who are empowered to manage the funds, and we are very concerned that in the interests of the people who are making the contributions, it would seem appropriate that there be an arm's-length board managing that money and ensuring that the money that is set aside for people's retirement is invested prudently in a way that seeks the highest return for the members. That's how the teachers' pension plan is run; that's how the OMERS pension plan is run. That's how most retirement pension plans, as far as I know, are run. They're not subject to political interference, where a provincial government that sets up the plan might dictate to this board that, let's say, \$1 billion is going into a specific infrastructure project that may be desirable in its own right and may have merit in its own right, but is not necessarily generating the highest return for the members. Of course, I think we have an obligation to be truthful and honest with people, that if indeed we're going to start deducting 1.9% of their pay, almost 2% of their pay, when this pension plan kicks in, that money is going to be invested prudently, ensuring stability and an attractive rate of return for those people's retirement. In fact, we suspect, and I think the government has alluded to the fact, that it hopes to use this money as a revenue stream for its infrastructure plan. So I point that out at the outset.

I am sure that government members will want to respond to this, and perhaps the minister will provide some clarification when he speaks at second reading, but at the same time, I think it's a very important point. All

of us in the Conservative caucus have identified infrastructure needs in our ridings over the years, and I have, on occasion, brought forward the infrastructure needs of my riding in this House through meetings and various other avenues that we have as members to try to advocate for my projects, and I'll continue to do that and expect that I'll have a chance to do that over the course of this debate. It looks like I've got just under an hour to go, but of course, we're going to have to stop this debate at 10:15 for question period. I'll get a chance later on, I hope, to talk about some of the specific infrastructure needs of my riding.

But, again, let's look at the bill itself. If this bill is passed into law, the government and every broader public sector entity, as defined in section 2 of the bill, must consider a specified list of infrastructure planning principles when making decisions respecting infrastructure. This bill, if passed, would ensure that the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure must periodically develop a long-term infrastructure plan, setting out, among other things, a description of the current state of wholly or partly government-owned infrastructure assets, a description of the government's anticipated infrastructure needs for at least the next 10 years, and a strategy to meet those needs, and each long-term infrastructure plan must be made public.

Of course, over the course of the estimates hearings, when we had the Minister of Infrastructure in for, I think, 10 hours, we asked repeatedly for a list of the government's long-term infrastructure projects and the plans that they had. They maintain that they have a long-term infrastructure plan, and have for years. Obviously, they were able to do that without Bill 6. At the same time, they would lead us to believe that they need Bill 6 now to continue doing that and ensure that it continues to be done in the future.

The bill would also force the government to consider a specified list of criteria when evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects for the construction of infrastructure assets. Subject to specified limitations, the government would be required to ensure that architects and persons with demonstrable expertise and experience with design relating to infrastructure assets be involved in the design of certain infrastructure assets.

If Bill 6 were passed, it would require the government to ensure that certain numbers of apprentices be employed or engaged in the construction or maintenance of government infrastructure assets. That is a point that our caucus has some questions about. Obviously, we're going to want answers over the course of this debate. Obviously, we support apprenticeship programs. We've had a lot to say about that in the lead-up to the election, and continue to advocate for a revision of the apprenticeship ratios so that you have one journeyman with one apprentice instead of the current situation in the province in the case of many of the skilled trades.

Also, this bill would ensure that the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure would consult with potentially affected persons or bodies

before a regulation being made under the act. Again, that's something that the minister could do; it doesn't really need a bill requiring him or her to do this. I think, obviously, that would be good public policy, and you would think that the government would just do that without feeling that it has to put it in a bill.

Again, the compendium notes that were attached to the bill—and I was pleased to have an opportunity to be briefed by ministry staff. They gave us some additional information about the bill. The compendium notes inform us that the bill, if passed, would enshrine a set of principles and requirements and authorities to promote the improvement of infrastructure planning in Ontario: again, I think, a principle and a goal that—I can't speak for all members of the House, but I would be very surprised if any member would say that's a bad idea.

Section 1 of the proposed legislation sets out the purpose of the act, which is “to establish mechanisms to encourage principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning”—we heard from the parliamentary assistant that that indeed is the government's key objective with this bill—that supports job creation and training opportunities, economic growth and protection of the environment, and incorporate design excellence into infrastructure planning”: again, a principle that I would suggest and expect the vast majority of members would agree with.

Section 2 sets out a series of definitions that can be used to interpret the proposed legislation.

Section 3 sets out specified lists of infrastructure planning principles which the government and every broader public sector entity—I assume that means municipalities and others—must consider when making decisions respecting infrastructure. These principles are:

“1. Infrastructure planning and investment should take a long-term view, and decision-makers should take into account the needs of Ontarians by being mindful of, among other things, demographic and economic trends in Ontario”—again, not a controversial statement; I think a principle that makes sense and is certainly one that I would express support for, and I believe most members of the House would as well.

“2. Infrastructure planning and investment should take into account any applicable budgets or fiscal plans, such as fiscal plans released under the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, 2004” and budgets adopted under the Municipal Act or the City of Toronto Act, again keeping in mind that we have to live within a budget. Unfortunately, this particular government hasn't managed its finances well going back to 2003, and they have doubled the provincial debt. I'll go into that later when I get the chance, probably in the second iteration of this speech, because I'm running out of time. But certainly the infrastructure plans would have to be made in accordance with, and with respect to, an overall fiscal plan. That only makes sense as well.

“3. Infrastructure priorities should be clearly identified in order to better inform investment decisions respecting infrastructure.” Again, that's something that we talk

about all the time. But certainly in my riding, I argue that the infrastructure project ideas that are brought to my attention should be priorities of this government, and in every case I would expect to see a positive response from the government. Certainly, we make our case based on identifying priorities and ensuring that those are well understood.

1010

The fact is, the government is spending billions of dollars on infrastructure each and every year, and I continue to ask, in many cases: Where are the projects that have been brought to my attention from the people of Wellington–Halton Hills? Where are those projects in the overall government plan?

We also see that the government is suggesting that infrastructure planning and investment should ensure continued provision of core public services such as health care and education. Again, I think that's something that might be characterized as a motherhood statement; all of us support that.

Investment decisions respecting infrastructure should support economic competitiveness, productivity, job creation and training opportunities. This is something that I've actually long advocated. I think that, if indeed the government is looking at prioritizing infrastructure investments, especially in a time of economic decline or downturn, we should be looking at the projects that will provide the best long-term economic support and impact.

In past rounds of infrastructure spending, there have been times when the joint federal and provincial infrastructure plan had placed a sort of premium on so-called “shovel-ready” projects. That's fine as far as it goes, in the sense that it creates an immediate stimulus to job creation, but at the same time, if we're borrowing billions of dollars to pay for these infrastructure projects—which is, in fact, what the government bragged about, spending \$100 billion so far; it could be argued that that's all borrowed money. But if we're borrowing money over the long term, and our children and grandchildren are going to be paying the interest on that cost, and if the original principal of the debt is ever retired—it's going to be passed on to the next generation—the fact is that you would hope that some of these projects will strengthen the long-term economy of the province of Ontario, and that there will be a long-term economic payback. How else could we justify borrowing all that money and leaving the bill to our children and grandchildren? Surely, that has to be a higher priority on many of these infrastructure programs that the federal and provincial governments will be pursuing in the future.

We also know that the government's objective is to ensure that infrastructure planning and investment should foster innovation by creating opportunities to make use of innovative technologies, services and practices, particularly where doing so would utilize technologies, techniques and practices developed in Ontario. Again, I have to characterize that as a motherhood statement, something that all of us would support. We all, I think, understand and have a greater appreciation of the need to

encourage innovation in our economy—not just in the business world, but in government and in every aspect of the economy.

Roger Martin, who has recently released his final report from his group called the Institute on Competitiveness and Prosperity, has long been an advocate of ensuring that we create an innovation-based culture, and I would agree with that. I think that if we're going to be able to compete over the long term in the world economy, we have to take greater steps to encourage innovation in every aspect of our economic life. That's something that Roger Martin has talked about for years. It's something I agree with, something I would hope that all members would agree with and something that obviously has to happen going forward. The fact that it's referenced in the government's plans with respect to Bill 6 is something that I would certainly support, in principle.

Infrastructure planning and investment should be evidence-based and transparent. Subject to any legal restrictions, investment decisions should be made on the basis of public information. Information with implications for infrastructure planning should be shared between government and broader public sector entities. Once again, that makes sense to me. I think that it's something that should be done. Surely an evidence-based approach is something, when there is an unlimited number of project ideas and we have finite resources. Obviously it can't just be a political decision; it has to be evidence-based and the homework has to be done.

The government has looked to municipalities to increasingly review their infrastructure needs and prioritize them on the basis of evidence, doing it in a transparent way. Obviously, the provincial government needs to do that too, not just point the finger at the municipal sector, and ensure that these decisions are based on evidence and are made in a transparent manner.

I realized when you motioned to me, Mr. Speaker, that maybe I should consider winding up. It is almost time, but I hope to have the opportunity—because I still have about 42 minutes to go—and I look forward to that opportunity, to continue my remarks on Bill 6.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Wellington—Halton Hills for his contribution to the debate this morning. We will continue that at a later point in time.

With it now being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The minister of northern—the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. You were going to wait; I could tell.

Hon. Bill Mauro: There you go. I was going to make you drag it out, Speaker. Thank you very much.

There's a reception tonight in the dining room, I think, from 5 to 7. The Cement Association of Canada is here, and many of them are in the galleries. I'd like to introduce Bruno Roux, president of Lafarge Canada and chair of the Cement Association of Canada; Marty Fallon and Martin Vroegh from St Marys Cement; Bill Galloway and Ruksana Mirza from Holcim; Alex Car from Essroc; and Michael McSweeney, president of the Cement Association of Canada. They're all here in the galleries today, and I welcome them.

Mr. Michael Harris: For those who didn't hear the previous member's introductions, I too would like to welcome folks today to the Legislature from the Cement Association of Canada: Marty Fallon and Martin Vroegh from St Marys Cement; Bruno Roux, president of Lafarge Canada and chair of the Cement Association of Canada; Bill Galloway, of course, and Ruksana Mirza from Holcim; Alex Car from Essroc; and, of course, Michael McSweeney, president of the Cement Association of Canada.

We look forward to the cement mixer this afternoon down in the dining room.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today the family of page captain Claudia Velimirovic. Her mother, Daphne Velimirovic, and grandmother, Stephanie Giamou, are in the public gallery today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Premier. My question is for you this morning. Later today, the Auditor General will present her annual report to the Legislature. It will include a look at your government's accounting practices and the province's debt burden, which you've more than doubled in the past 11 years to almost \$300 billion. Your wasteful, politicized spending now means you pay \$11 billion of interest instead of investing that money in health care, education, transit and infrastructure.

Premier, your government gets drafts of these audits in advance, so what is this year's equivalent of the billion-dollar gas plant scandal? Is it going to be MaRS? Is it going to be smart meters? Premier, how much are we adding today to your government's growing record of fiscal waste?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I look forward to the Auditor General's annual report. It will be tabled later this afternoon, as the member opposite recognizes. The opposition is heckling that we're not looking forward to it. In fact, I believe that the Auditor General plays a very important role in terms of shining a light on issues that need to be addressed by government. I welcome her input.

We welcome accountability, and the existence of the Auditor General and the work that she does is the defin-

ition of accountability. In fact, because we welcome accountability, that's why we are moving to pass Bill 8 today, which I believe will provide unprecedented transparency. I believe that the Ombudsman is here with us. The accountability that is already in place will be enhanced as we move towards the passage of Bill 8.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, let's take a look at your typical response to the auditor's reports. Last year, the AG gave you a failing grade on the massive backlog for autism treatment; slow ambulance service; and mandated school lunches that kids are now rejecting in favour of fast food. On all counts, you've failed to take her report seriously.

She also took aim at your creative accounting with Ontario Northland. You claimed a savings of \$265 million by divesting Ontario Northland, yet the auditor said that it would actually cost \$820 million. That's a billion-dollar fallacy that you were happy to perpetuate.

People demand accountability from government. Premier, will you commit today to take the recommendations of the auditor seriously and act with the force and focus we all expect from the Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We will absolutely take the Auditor General's report seriously. We always do take the Auditor General's report seriously and in fact act on the recommendations, the suggestions that the Auditor General makes, and work with the Auditor General.

I think that is a key part of this: to recognize that the Auditor General brings a new set of eyes to the operation of government and works with ministries to understand what it is that ministries are doing to mitigate the concerns she may have, but also to point to how we might—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There seems to be an ongoing conversation between the President of the Treasury Board and the member from Leeds–Grenville. It will stop.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —to look forward as to how we might work to address the concerns that the Auditor General raises. That's the natural course of the relationship between government and the Auditor General—all governments.

We take her report seriously and we look forward to it this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, the auditor isn't alone in passing judgment on your risky financial management. StatsCan says that between 2008 and 2012, Ontario ran accumulated deficits of \$84 billion. That's 10 times more than the next province, BC, at \$8 billion. Lakehead University's Livio Di Matteo says that this makes Ontario the worst economic performer in the country—he calls it a “travesty”—and that your policies have driven down private investment, suppressed productivity and econom-

ic growth, killed job creation, and caused a “deterioration of ... public finances.”

Premier, we want prosperity, better quality of life and accountability in government. Isn't it time to stop politicking and make Ontario first?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think that's a great idea. Let's stop politicking. Let's look at the reality that Ontario has been the number one destination for foreign direct investment. Let's look at the reality that we have recovered more than 500,000 net new jobs since the economic downturn. Let's look at the reality that in the second half of question period—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I found it rather quiet when the question was being put. I want the same for the answer.

Please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that in the second half of question period, there will inevitably be questions from the same party about investments in the talent and skills of the people in their ridings, the infrastructure in their ridings, partnerships with businesses in their ridings. Those questions come in the second part of question period because essentially, the people across the floor understand that the pillars of our plan, the investments that people need in their constituencies, are exactly what we need to do to restore the economy in Ontario and to keep us on track.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the Premier: Over the past two weeks we've been hearing from scores of small businesses all over this province. Their message has been clear: They want relief from this government for businesses to thrive and succeed, relief from crushing red tape—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Agriculture, come to order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: —relief from skyrocketing energy prices, relief from new payroll taxes like the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan you're planning to ram through this Legislature; 94% of small business want you to cut red tape, 93% want relief from skyrocketing energy rates and over half say your pension tax will result in them cutting jobs.

Premier, why don't you take them seriously?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Agriculture, come to order, second time.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I certainly will look to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, because small businesses in Ontario have partnered with this government very well, and there are small businesses across Ontario that have benefited from investments like the regional development funds, like investments in technology, and have benefited from the

very well-educated workforce that we have that allows them to expand.

1040

But I just want to address the issue of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. From what the member opposite is saying, I guess he would call the Canada Pension Plan a tax, because what we are talking about is not a tax. We're talking about a plan that would allow people to put money aside so that they would have retirement security, just as the Canada Pension Plan allows for that.

We know people need this. We know that people, in fact, across the country are not saving enough for their retirement. We are going to take action, Mr. Speaker, because there are people in Nipissing who need this plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, the most heinous example of you not listening to small business is your new pension tax. Here's what Ian Lee at Carleton University tells us. He says that forcing employees and employers to take money out of their pockets for your pension scheme will "hurt the economy," "eliminates the discretion of taxpayers," and reduces the amount that can be invested where they want. This is not a policy that helps Ontarians. This is not a policy that grows our economy, and it's not a policy that makes it easier for small businesses to stay alive and make Ontario first.

Premier, will you do the right thing and put your flawed pension tax back on the shelf?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Associate Minister of Finance, responsible for the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite knows full well that this is not a tax. In fact, this is an investment in the future of Ontario. The ORPP is an investment in people's futures and a long-term enhancement to our economy that will support three million Ontarians who do not currently have a workplace-based pension plan.

In the past few weeks, in fact, Mr. Speaker, studies have underscored the importance of closing the savings gap. This is a real challenge that we cannot ignore. We have to take leadership.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, six out of 10 Canadians are not currently saving for retirement and, in fact, half feel that they are ill-prepared to retire at all—

Interjections.

Mr. Todd Smith: Out of touch.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is in touch with me.

Please finish.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Without action today, this has the potential to stagnate growth and to create economic uncertainty.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot allow that. We are taking action with the Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, all Ontarians deserve to work towards a comfortable retirement, but there are other ways a government can help make that reality rather than new taxes. When you couple energy prices set to soar 42%, an \$11-billion—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is warned.

Please finish.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Add an \$11-billion annual red tape burden and a WSIB tax costing contractors up to \$6,000 a year, and it's no wonder we lost 2,700 small businesses in Ontario last year alone. This is not how we help small business; it's how you turned Ontario into a have-not province.

Given the reduced growth forecast, and last month's dismal job report, are you ready to risk more jobs to save your own? Premier, how does running the most expensive jurisdiction in the country help Ontario first?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: You know, the member opposite is not dealing with the facts. The fact is that this government is continuing to work to strengthen our economy today while making the necessary decisions to ward off a problem that we see on the horizon.

Mr. Speaker, our government is confident that we are supporting the needs of business today. Ontario is the first jurisdiction in North America for foreign direct investment. Ontario's tax system, in fact, is the lowest and most competitive of any OECD country and is the lowest in North America.

The introduction of the ORPP is another way of making investments to build Ontario up, so that when people retire they will have a predictable, consistent stream of income that they will continue to spend in Ontario's economy. That, Mr. Speaker, is what we need to do to strengthen Ontario's economic future.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Liberal government is cutting child care in this province. Sudbury's municipal daycare manager says their budget was cut by \$2 million, and he says another \$3-million cut could be on the way.

The Liberal minister says that she doesn't understand the problem. Let me explain: Liberal cuts mean that municipal daycare centres are closing, and moms and dads are left lying awake at night trying to figure out where their children are going to be getting their child care from.

My question is, why is this Premier closing down child care centres in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, what this government is doing is actually opening spaces in full-day kindergarten. That means that tens of thousands of children

are going to have access to that full-day kindergarten program that otherwise they would not have had. In addition, as we have said, the Child Care Modernization Act, which has passed through this Legislature, has the potential to open up 6,000 new, licensed, safe spaces to allow more families in the province to have access to child care.

So quite the contrary to what the leader of the third party is saying, we have worked with the child care sector. We recognize that the implementation of full-day kindergarten has meant that there is a transition in child care provision, but thousands more children have access to safe, affordable child care and full-day kindergarten because of the policies of this government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, it sounds a little bit like the children's dental plan that the Liberals pretended wasn't being cut the other day. The Liberals talk a lot about investing in child care, but here's the reality: The Liberal government is cutting child care across Ontario. The latest example is Sudbury. New investments are nowhere to be found. The municipal daycare manager says that Sudbury hasn't seen—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The municipal daycare manager in Sudbury hasn't seen any "new dollars or new investments." It means moms and dads in Sudbury are worried, and rightfully so. They shouldn't have to worry about whether their child will have care next week, next month or next year.

Is the Premier proud of shutting down child care spaces and leaving parents in the lurch in Sudbury?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just address a couple of issues. First of all, the drive-by swipe that the leader of the third party made on the Healthy Smiles program: The fact is that 70,000 more children are going to be able to get dental care because of the program that we are putting in place. The reality is that she is just wrong in terms of kids losing that care. We have made certain that children who are receiving dental care today will receive dental care in an ongoing way. Those kids are not losing the care. It's very clear in the program that we have put in place. Those cuts are not happening.

She was wrong on that, and she's wrong on child care. The fact is that since 2003, a 90% increase in funding has gone into child care—close to a billion dollars. We have moved from \$532 million to nearly \$1 billion. There has been a consistent increase in child care funding.

I don't know the situation in Sudbury, but I know why the member opposite is talking about—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Finding affordable child care in Ontario is already a nightmare for parents. In the southwest, Sarnia families watched as Coronation Park Day Nursery closed its doors just last month. In the north, Sudbury families are bracing for the closure of

their municipal child care centre. In eastern Ontario, the Queen's Day Care Centre in Kingston has a wait-list of 500 children, but instead of seeing investment, they've lost 137 spaces, notwithstanding the fact that they have 500 kids on their wait-list. Child care spaces across Ontario are disappearing, and families don't know what to do. It is creating chaos. It hurts children, and it hurts parents and families.

I want to know, does this Liberal Premier really think it's progressive to be shutting down public not-for-profit child care spaces across this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, I know why the leader of the third party is talking about Sudbury: because Sudbury doesn't have a representative in this Legislature right now.

1050

Since 2003, child care funding in Sudbury has increased by—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Child care funding in Sudbury, since 2003, has increased by 110%, from \$75 million to—Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we have consistently increased funding to child care.

The other reality is that we have implemented full-day kindergarten. That means that there is a change in the delivery of child care around the province, because the four- and five-year-olds who may have been in child care are now in full-day kindergarten. So there are different models developing across the province, but there's more money and there are more spaces.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This question is also for the Premier. Today, the Auditor General will be tabling her annual report. When we asked, the Liberals couldn't seem to find the business case for the MaRS loan. They didn't know whether they were going to lose millions of dollars in city of Toronto grants, and they didn't know what the final cost of the bailout was going to be. When the Auditor General came knocking, could the Premier find the business case for MaRS, or did the AG also get the cold shoulder?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just need to correct my record on the last question: The funding for Sudbury child care has gone from \$7.5 million to \$15.8 million.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the Auditor General's report, I will repeat what I said to the member of the Conservative Party: We look forward to the Auditor General's report. I'm not going to pre-empt her announcements this afternoon, but she will look at the operation of the government, she will look at the various areas that she has chosen to examine and she will give us advice. She will do that having worked with the ministry, ministries having worked with her, to talk about what it is we are doing to address the concerns that she has identified, and

what we can do going forward to continue to address the concerns that she might identify.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.
Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Auditor General is also reporting on child care. Four children have died here in Ontario since 2013. No parent should ever have to suffer that kind of loss. As a mom, it's hard for me to even imagine. Now the Premier is cutting public, not-for-profit child care spaces across Ontario, meaning more kids will be in unlicensed care. Does the Premier think that cutting funding and closing down public, not-for-profit licensed child care centres, driving kids into unlicensed child care, is actually good public policy for the province of Ontario in 2014?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.
Hon. Liz Sandals: I think we need to deal with the facts here: The funding for child care in Ontario has doubled to a billion dollars since 2003. We have created, since 2003, 130,000 additional licenced child care spaces. In the last four years, the average creation of new licenced child care spaces has been 18,000 new spaces per year, Speaker. In addition to that, 265,000 children are in full-day kindergarten; that's all the four and five-year-olds in the province. That is not cutting; that is adding.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Auditor General will also be reporting on smart meters. Smart-metering hasn't reduced electricity consumption at all in this province, and people's bills are still going up. It's caused anxiety for people, especially seniors, shift workers and low-income families. This is the chance for the Premier to finally admit that the smart-metering program was not so smart after all. Is she prepared to do that today?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Minister of Energy, please.
Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I'm very pleased to answer that question, Mr. Speaker. Studies have shown that people are saving money with smart meters. Not only are they saving money with smart meters, the system is generating—

Interjections.
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, studies have shown that time-of-use pricing has been successful at reducing consumption by residential customers during peak periods by between 2% and 5%. In addition to that, it's generating a lot of savings in costs to the system itself; it alerts utilities when lines go down, a service that they never had before; it redirects electricity to restore power outages; it's improving accuracy—

Interjection.
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —in accounting—
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question?

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Concerns regarding medical tourism have been raised to your government dating back to at least 2011 by a number of health care organizations, including, among others, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario. This practice, in which certain health care organizations attract patients from other countries on a pay-for-treatment basis, seriously undermines our publicly funded health care system, yet nothing substantive has been done to end it. In fact, in April 2014, the previous Minister of Health expressed her support for this practice.

Minister, on November 21 you sent a letter asking health care organizations not to “market to, solicit or treat international patients.” This approach clearly hasn't worked before, so, Minister, when will you introduce an outright ban on medical tourism?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the opposition. In fact, we have asked our hospitals to end the practice of actively marketing to or soliciting international patients to come to this province to avail themselves of our health care facilities. Of course, we're not talking about those important functions that our hospitals play in terms of bringing humanitarian patients to the province. I think all of us agree that programs like the Herbie Fund at Toronto Sick Kids hospital, for example, need to continue.

We're talking about a specific category of individuals who would choose to pay to gain entry to hospitals in the province. I have to say that it's a small number of hospitals that, to date, have engaged in that practice. There are very specific principles—I'll get into those principles in the supplementary—that have adhered to hospitals engaging in the practice of receiving international patients, but we've ended that practice specifically with regard to marketing and soliciting to individual—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
Interjection.
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, come to order.

Supplementary?
Ms. Christine Elliott: Minister, it's clear your government isn't taking these concerns seriously enough. In 2012, the previous Minister of Health warned hospitals they could only treat international patients if no public dollars were used, no Ontario patients were displaced and all the revenue generated was spent on hospital services for Ontarians. Clearly, that's not happening. These conditions were not adhered to, because another warning letter was sent in August 2014. Again, no compliance. Now we have your November statement. There is no reason to believe, based on past practices, that there will be compliance with this latest statement from your office.

Minister, will you introduce legislation banning medical tourism here in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Perhaps the member opposite hasn't read my most recent letter—and I'm happy to

provide her with a copy. It's crystal clear: We are ending the practice of allowing our hospitals to market, solicit and receive those international patients, precisely the ones she's talking about. We are ending that practice.

Two years ago, it's true that a letter was sent by the ministry, followed up this past August, stipulating what at that time were the requirements in place: no tax dollars could go towards this practice, any revenue needs to come back to service Ontario patients, and it's very clear that it certainly couldn't impact the care that Ontarians are receiving in any way, shape or form.

We've gone further. We did a review. I initiated a review. In fact, it was my predecessor, the President of the Treasury Board, who initiated the review. We had to get more information to find out precisely what was taking place. We've ended the practice. There's no question that that practice has ended.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Yesterday, New Democrats tabled a motion that urges the government to move immediately to prevent predatory practices by payday loan companies. The motion calls for banning gift card exchanges at exorbitant rates and reducing the fees charged on payday loans from the current \$21 per \$100.

Will the government be voting for the NDP motion supporting vulnerable Ontarians, or will this government side with the predatory payday loan industry?

1100

Hon. David Orazietti: I appreciate the member's oversimplification of the issue. As the member is aware, we have taken swift action around these organizations. With respect to Money Mart in particular, we reached out to them and expressed our displeasure with regard to the practice that they've engaged in; they suspended that practice immediately. We need to review the matter further.

As the member also knows, the rate of lending and the aspect around gift cards and the resale of gift cards is not in violation of the current Payday Loans Act, 2008. In fact, there is no province in this country that has gift card resale as part of any existing legislation.

I committed to the member that we will review the matter, and we will look at the resale of gift cards in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Often doing the right thing can be very simple. Banning practices such as redeeming gift cards for cash at 50% of the cards' value is only one of the many areas in the Payday Loans Act that needs to be changed, and can be changed if the government has the will to do so.

I would have thought that forcing vulnerable individuals, already under stress during the holiday season, to pay this extraordinarily high rate for an exchange would be something that the government would be motivated by to move forward with some legislation to actually ensure

that Ontarians are going to be protected moving forward, but apparently this government is not committed to that.

In our motion, New Democrats have proposed modest, reasonable Payday Loans Act reforms that would actually protect vulnerable people from this predatory industry. Why won't this government commit to voting for this motion, to ensure that we actually support our vulnerable people?

Hon. David Orazietti: Speaker, our government is committed to protecting consumers in the province of Ontario. We have done a consultation with the sector earlier this year, before the election, and we will be acting, going forward in the new year, on proposed changes around the legislation. We do have a new bill to introduce in relation to payday lending in the province, with standards that will continue to raise the bar to protect consumers in this province. We're committed to reviewing the issue around the resale of gift cards, and the member knows full well that the aspect of gift cards being taken for cash value was not in this instance part of any payday lending aspect. If it was, they would be in violation of the act.

We've asked them to cease. They have done that. We will look at other ways that we can ensure, through charities, that folks can receive the funding that they need with respect to those who are vulnerable in Ontario.

PENSION PLANS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: My question is to the Associate Minister of Finance. Minister, in the past few weeks, both Manulife and the Conference Board of Canada have released studies highlighting the retirement savings challenge of Ontarians. According to the Conference Board, only six in 10 Canadians are putting money away for retirement, and most don't feel that they have saved enough to live comfortably in their golden years.

The Manulife study reveals that almost half of Canadians expect to be in debt in retirement. Mr. Speaker, I know that some of the residents in my riding expressed their concerns during my campaign about the retirement savings of their children and the impact that low retirement savings will have on our economy.

Minister, I understand that yesterday you introduced legislation that will help strengthen Ontario's retirement income system. Can you please inform the House how the new legislation will help to strengthen our retirement system?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Merci to the hard-working member from Ottawa-Orléans. The under-savings problem in this country is real. It has been a common thread in all my conversations with Ontarians. That is why I was very pleased to stand before the House and introduce the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014. If passed, this legislation would create a savings tool for the people of this province designed to give people a secure retirement-income floor that they can rely on.

This act would commit the government to establishing the ORPP by January 1, 2017, and would enshrine in law

some of the key elements of the ORPP that we discussed in our 2014 budget. This act would help millions of Ontarians save for retirement and help move forward a made-in-Ontario solution to the retirement under-savings problem.

The cost of inaction is too high. We have an economic imperative that we act now, and that's what our government is doing with this legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Merci à la ministre pour la réponse. I'm very pleased to see our government stepping up and taking action to address this important concern for so many Ontarians. I know that constituents in my riding will be keen to learn about the steps that our government is taking to address the saving challenge.

Mr. Speaker, again through you to the associate minister: Over the past several weeks I have had constituents express interest in the administrative body that will administer the plan. Can you please explain to the House how the funds gathered from the ORPP will be managed?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you again to the member for the question.

In our legislation we reiterated our commitment from the budget and the fall economic statement that the ORPP will be designed to mirror many elements of the CPP. The ORPP would be publicly administered, at arm's length from government. We will put in place a strong governance model for managing investments and administering the plan.

Ontario is home to some of the largest and most highly regarded pension funds, as stated this week in the New York Times. We will be leveraging the expertise in this sector and in Ontario's financial services sector. The former CEO of OMERS, Mr. Michael Nobrega, is providing guidance and support on the implementation of the ORPP. In particular, he will provide advice on creating an administrative entity and developing administrative and operational capacity. I look forward to continuing to work with Mr. Nobrega and the leading experts on our technical advisory group to ensure that we create the best possible plan for the people of Ontario.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Family health teams across the province are losing their qualified staff and finding it difficult to find replacements. These teams, which provide valuable service in rural Ontario, are watching their staff leave to work in hospitals, CCACs and long-term care, where compensation and benefits are better. What is your plan to ensure that family health teams have enough staff to care for our communities?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: First of all, I'm very proud of the work that all our front-line health care workers do across this province. They are there, often and generally, when people are in their greatest moment of need, and they provide a vital and important service.

It's important, when we look at our health care resource challenge, that we understand that there are

issues of recruitment and retention from time to time. As a ministry, we're working hard to address those specific sectors within our health care system.

A perfect example, I think, was earlier this year, when we made the announcement—we've now implemented it—for our PSWs, or person support workers, where we will be increasing by \$4 over the next three years to make sure we are helping to attract the right people to that important profession, but also that the ability to recruit and sustain and maintain them, particularly in the home and community environment, is a viable option. Certainly, as we look at all the health care sectors, we will continue to take that approach.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: While family health teams are provided funding to hire front-line care staff, they are unable to fill the positions. There is currently a 20% vacancy rate in nurse practitioner positions within our family health teams. When these positions are left vacant, how are these teams supposed to provide the services people need?

Again, Minister, what is your plan to address this growing recruitment and retention crisis—and it is a crisis?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Our plan certainly isn't—in fact, it's the opposite of what the opposition's plan was in the 1990s, when they fired more than 6,000 nurses in this province. In fact, since we came into office, more than 24,000 nurses have been added to this province to help provide health care to people on the front lines—and more than 10,000 RNs.

I met recently with our nurse practitioners—a couple of weeks ago. They have indicated that they want to work together on the issue of recruitment and retention. We know there are challenges in certain parts of the province. We have, I would say, led the way for Canada in terms of the construct of the nurse practitioner-led clinic; we now have 25 of them around the province. We will continue to work with our nurse practitioners, as with all nurses, to make sure they are able to find those jobs and stay in those jobs successfully.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Yesterday, your government introduced two different pieces of pension legislation: the first, a fully-formed PRPP bill to appease your friends on Bay Street; and the second, little more than an obvious attempt to distract from the first. It is great to see the government getting into the holiday spirit and putting a bow on the PRPP legislation, but Ontarians are not that easily fooled.

1110

Why does your government continue to make deception your first priority?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm not particularly enamoured with that. Would you please withdraw?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you for the question. I appreciate the member actually having listened to the announcement yesterday. She's absolutely correct. We brought forward, for the first time in Ontario's history, an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and a retirement security system to provide greater integrity, greater choice and greater support for people as they retire in the years to come.

That, of course, includes providing a complementary plan that is also being adopted across the country. It would be ill-advised and wrong on our part not to offer greater choice to supplement people's retirement security, hence providing a low-cost, pooled retirement plan that enables all individuals to yet again provide for their security in a much more cost-effective way.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: The government has a lot to say about choice and voluntary savings options, but nearly 50% of working Ontarians will likely be exempted from the ORPP and won't have the option to join. We have years to wait—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, second time.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: —for the design details of the ORPP, and hopefully we will have that opportunity to design the best plan possible. As a general rule, the greater the size of the pool, the greater the benefit to pensioners. The more people in the plan, the more money in the pool.

Rather than catering to the interests of their friends on Bay Street, will the government allow exempted Ontarians the opportunity to voluntarily enrol in the ORPP? Is the priority of this government the financial security of banks and insurance companies or the financial security of hard-working Ontarians?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite is asking about how we are going to support and provide for an Ontario publicly administered pension plan to support the people of Ontario. Hopefully more people across Canada, in other provinces, are interested in what we are doing.

You voted against that very measure and now you're standing here, asking us how we are going to provide a public plan to support those very people. You voted against it. We are offering that program. We recognize the benefit of having a pooled system that enables more people to benefit from retirement security.

Retirement security also includes other plans, other plans that are more cost-effective, and that includes the pooled registered retirement plan with the PRPPs, which is what we've advised and what we will be providing in the coming year. They're complementary; they're not plans that are—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

SKILLS TRAINING

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, many Ontarians are having difficulty getting back to work because they lack skills and training necessary to fill the jobs of today's economy. I have discussed this with professors and students in my riding of Kingston and the Islands from both St. Lawrence College and Queen's University. At the same time, employers are constantly looking for new ways to recruit and train qualified employees to perform highly skilled work in Ontario's competitive labour market.

Our government, along with employers across our province, understands the importance of investing in skills training and recognizes that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to developing a workforce with the right skills and knowledge for the new economy. I was able to see the benefits of the critical relationship between our colleges and universities and the workforce firsthand.

Minister, we were pleased to see that after months of leadership from Ontario at the bargaining table you recently announced that the Canada-Ontario Job Grant is open for business—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for that question. I'm happy to announce that businesses across Ontario can now apply for the Canada-Ontario Job Grant. This grant provides an opportunity for employers to invest in the training of their workforce with help from the government. The Canada-Ontario Job Grant will serve to encourage greater participation of employers in skills training and also enhances employment and skills across our province.

Thanks to Ontario's hard work, we gained important flexibility for funding the Canada-Ontario Job Grant and made sure that our most vulnerable workers were not left out in the cold.

The quality of our skilled workforce is our single greatest asset in this province. Ontario's economy is stronger when every Ontarian can contribute to our economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Minister, for informing the members on how the Canada-Ontario Job Grant is helping Ontarians get back to work and helping employers train their employees to do the highly skilled jobs in Ontario's competitive labour market. It's great to hear that our government is committed to taking on a leadership role in skills training programs that develop a strong and modernized workforce in Ontario.

I know from my riding of Kingston and the Islands that we have some excellent examples of programs that are supporting small businesses and local employment, particularly at St. Lawrence College. Some perfect examples are programs such as the brick and stone masonry program, computer networking and technical support, culinary management, or the more technical energy systems engineering technology program.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us more about the efforts our government has taken to gather feedback from employers across the province and how we are helping accommodate the specific needs of our small businesses?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member for that question.

Mr. Speaker, with the help of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, we listened to what businesses across the province of Ontario had to say, and we are taking action.

To make it easier for small businesses across the province to participate in the Canada-Ontario Job Grant, they will have more flexibility on how to fund their portion of the training.

We are also asking employers to help us shape two new training initiatives. One of them is our Customized Training program, which will develop sector-specific training. The second one is our UpSkill pilot, which will provide technical training tailored for vulnerable workers across the province of Ontario.

Employer-driven training will help us continue to build a workforce at the right time for the right place in the province of Ontario.

DIABETES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. In response to a question from the Liberal member from Cambridge, the minister recently stated in the Legislature, "I'm proud that, in fact, under our government, every single Ontarian with diabetes who wants a family doctor has one." Would the minister like to retract that statement?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, in a province with 13 million people, it is a challenge, of course, to constantly be able to provide every possible level of health care to every single individual at every single moment in time. But, certainly, the progress that we've made on our Ontario Diabetes Strategy is extraordinary. In fact, it's a model—not just in Canada, but around the world—for the progress that it has made.

That objective that we have, that every single Ontarian who has diabetes who wants a family doctor has one—that objective stands. I'm motivated and want to work closely with the member opposite if he has identified an individual in the province where that's not the case.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, some of my constituents who have diabetes are spending hours in the emergency room to receive the medical care they need. They could have told this minister that he was wrong. His comments show he's completely out of touch with the reality of the doctor shortage in Perth-Wellington.

For three years, my office has received calls from those who desperately want and need a doctor. Two weeks ago, we assisted a constituent with his diabetes assessment form from the MTO. He does not have a doctor and came to us for help with his medical paperwork. What does the minister have to say to him and others waiting for about a year on this government's Health Care Connect list?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we've come a long way in terms of providing a family doctor to those Ontarians who want and need one. I think the figure is 94%. It may be within one percentage of that.

We've made an even more ambitious target in our platform that we're going to carry through with in the next several years. That goal is that every Ontarian who wants a family doctor in this province will be entitled to one and will receive one, whether that's a family doctor or a nurse practitioner, but certainly that primary care provider that that individual wants and deserves.

We have come a long way, I have to say, in terms of the provision of services. In fact, Health Care Connect is an important part of that, where individuals who don't have a family doctor or a nurse practitioner or a primary care provider can actually enrol with Health Care Connect, which works with them diligently to source and connect them with that individual who will provide them with health care services.

1120

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Yesterday, injured workers and their advocates gathered on the steps of the WSIB. They were there to send a message to this government that it's not all right to send hefty safety rebates to companies that have been convicted of health and safety violations that have resulted in workplace deaths. They were there to tell this government that it's not all right to sneak in pre-existing conditions as a reason to deny sick and injured workers their rightful benefits.

Why is this government allowing injured workers to be harmed by these reckless policy changes, and why does it send fat cheques to companies that have been complicit in workplace deaths?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for that question. I was able to attend the rally yesterday. I had a good conversation with many of the injured workers who had shown up to express their concerns. Certainly, these are concerns that have been expressed over the years as each successive government seeks to improve the system. Often we talk about the premium rates; we talk about experience rating. I think what we need to do is remember that this system was put in place to treat injured workers, and that's what we've been doing at the Ministry of Labour.

The WSIB is doing a review on its benefits policy. It's doing a review on its pre-existing conditions. It's consulting with the injured workers' community; it's consulting with labour; it's consulting with business. I'm optimistic that at the end of this process we're going to have an improved process in place for injured workers in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I appreciate the minister's acknowledgment in reference to the historical significance of why we have the WSIB in Ontario, because

under the Justice William Meredith principles agreement reached in 1913, workers gave up their right to sue their employers with the expectation of receiving just and fair compensation if they were injured on the job.

Just and fair treatment is what injured workers expect and it's what this government should ensure is provided, but it's not what is happening at the WSIB these days. Every one of the members in this chamber knows that and should acknowledge that. Profoundly unfair and anti-worker policies are being brought in secretly without any oversight from this Legislature. When will this government ensure that injured and sick workers are treated with the respect and dignity that they deserve?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for the supplementary. I think we all agree in this House that injured workers in this province deserve to be treated with respect; they deserve to be treated with dignity. I don't think that's in question.

Often, from time to time, the WSIB takes a look at its own practices and policies. It takes comments from individuals who have availed themselves of the system. It talks to people from the labour community, it talks to people from the employer community and it seeks to put in place a system that is fair to all employees in this province. As a result of the input that has come in from labour groups and from injured workers' groups, changes have been made to the pre-existing policies. Changes have been made to the benefit policies. I'm hopeful, as we move ahead with the input from the three parties and from the opposition parties, that we see further changes to the experience rating program as well.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, the Honourable Helena Jaczek. Minister, as you will know, last week we celebrated the United Nations International Day of Persons with Disabilities and tomorrow will be United Nations Human Rights Day. These important days are an opportunity for all of us to acknowledge the challenges and barriers, including, of course, poverty and discrimination, that people with disabilities face every day. This is especially important in my own riding of Etobicoke North.

Your ministry and this government have taken a strong position on recognizing individuals with disabilities, in particular their right to inclusion, support and having the same opportunities as all Ontarians. This includes introducing a landmark piece of legislation, the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, almost 10 years ago.

Minister, I ask you, doctor to doctor, what has the government done recently to help people who are living with disabilities reach their full potential?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Merci au député d'Etobicoke-Nord pour sa question. The work our government has done and will continue to do in this area is crucial to upholding the human rights and advancing the quality of life of all Ontarians. As Minister of Community and

Social Services, I look forward to realizing our government's commitments to ensuring Ontarians with disabilities are better supported.

Over the past two years, our government has made significant improvements to the Ontario Disability Support Program. Now everyone who works can earn up to \$200 without having their assistance benefits reduced at all; and for earnings above \$200, benefits are reduced only by 50 cents on every dollar earned.

Beginning in April 2015, a new streamlined employment benefit will be introduced to support ODSP recipients in finding competitive employment. With the new benefit, recipients with disabilities will be able to access up to \$1,800 to help realize their employment goals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister. We appreciate your stewardship of these files, and of course the recent changes will make a tangible difference for people finding and maintaining employment.

A number of agencies in my own riding of Etobicoke North are doing great work to support individuals in their daily lives and in seeking better integration in their communities and the economy. Unfortunately, however, it's still a reality that individuals living with disabilities face enhanced challenges. In Ontario, for example, one in seven people has some type of disability. This means about 62,000 adults and 28,000 children.

The ability for an individual to pursue competitive employment can be one of the most fulfilling life experiences, especially for someone who may have thought they never could. Speaker, how is this government supporting individuals with developmental disabilities to pursue their goals in employment?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: My mandate is to drive forward the transformation of supports for those living with disabilities. This means ensuring these individuals have access to the right assistance so they can pursue the same opportunities in our communities and economy.

Recently, we launched a Development Services Employment and Modernization Fund, with the goal of making integrated employment in the community the preferred outcome for people with a developmental disability. This investment of up \$15 million over the next three years will promote inclusive work environments and opportunities for people with developmental disabilities to find competitive employment, develop successful job skills and contribute to the growth of the province.

This new fund has already received 260 submissions from agencies in its first allotment. The successful applications will be announced in early 2015.

If our province is to realize its full potential, then we must be sure that all Ontarians can reach their own individual potential.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, your flawed Bill 10 was time-allocated through this House at record speed, with hardly any consultation and almost no debate.

During the committee hearings, your PA, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, informed deputants that they would be part of a minister's round table that would provide input into drafting regulations. Minister, can you inform the House today when the round table discussions will take place, and if that input will include members of the Coalition of Independent Childcare Providers of Ontario? And if you are not including the coalition, are you telling the people in the province that they have to go to a court of law to get fair representation?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, what will happen is we've got extensive regulations that need to be done with Bill 10. One of the amendments that people might be interested in, which we did include with Bill 10 at the hearings, was to actually put it in writing, to make our intent clear, that the new regulations for the unlicensed home child care sector will not take effect until January 2016, which means that there's a transition period of a year. We've put that right in the law so it will be absolutely clear to everyone.

What I'm saying here is that there are a lot of regulations to be developed, and we will do what we always do: We will post each and every regulation for 45 days.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, I never heard an answer on that.

Are you not ashamed of how the House leader jammed this Bill 10 through for you? But I want to give him credit: He made sure you secretly made it to Ottawa, and he made sure we had 93 amendments/motions passed in less than 40 minutes without debate. I want to thank you both because we now have some excellent new candidates who want to put their names forward for our party because of the way that you treated them and the way you treated the ICPs on Bill 10.

1130

I ask again—I would just like a clear answer—when can we expect your regulation round tables, and will independent child care providers be included or not included? I just want an answer; you never included the answer. You made it up. You talk about amendments; you never answered my question.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Actually, I did answer your question. When we post something for 45 days, that means that there is a 45-day period during which any member of the public who wishes to comment on the regulation is able to do so. What my parliamentary assistant committed to is that there would consultations. When you post a regulation—trust me, we know this in the child care area. We get hundreds of responses. We collect the responses, we analyze, and then we adjust the regulation. That's what the consultation will do.

But it is interesting to know what the real interest in Bill 10 was: They wanted to recruit more candidates.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is to the Premier. Good morning, Premier. Southwestern

Ontario is home to some of the most beautiful countryside in Ontario. It includes prime farmland that feeds—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wouldn't take it any further, please.

Please finish your question.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. It's to the Premier. I'm talking about the farmland in southwestern Ontario that feeds Ontario and watersheds that flow into three Great Lakes.

It also includes the northwestern tip of the Marcellus Shale, the same rock formation that hosts fracking operations in Pennsylvania and West Virginia which have caused so much environmental devastation.

Recently, the governments of Quebec, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador, and New Brunswick have taken action to address this new environmental threat. Will the government follow their lead and impose a moratorium on fracking?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member for the question. It's interesting: I was wondering if, perhaps at some point, we would hear a question on this issue in the House. I asked my staff some time ago to provide me with as much information as is possible, indeed, if a question had arisen on this particular issue. It's a sensitive issue. I know that the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change also takes specific interest in this issue.

What I can tell you is that should there be a need to move forward with this process in Ontario, there is legislation in effect—I believe it's called the oil and gas act—that would need to be changed before fracking could be allowed in the province of Ontario. What I can tell you right now is that there are no applications—as I understand it, because I've asked my staff to get back to me on this—before my ministry or any other ministry that I'm aware of. So currently nothing is before us. In fact, I am told that if there was, it would require a legislative change before it could move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The American company Lone Pine is suing the Quebec government under the North American Free Trade Agreement for loss of future business due to its moratorium on fracking. Lone Pine believes it has the right to frack under the St. Lawrence River.

If Ontario doesn't take action now, other companies will lay claim to our countryside and then claim a permanent right to frack before we know what the environmental risks are. At least two companies are considering fracking in southwestern Ontario. Will the government impose a moratorium on fracking now before it's too late?

Hon. Bill Mauro: As I mentioned in the original answer—and I will check further, but I've asked this question. I've been told that should anybody look to move forward with fracking in the province of Ontario, in fact, legislative change would be required. I guess if that's accurate, it would mean that a moratorium at this point is unnecessary.

Given the fact that the member has raised the question, I will endeavour again to look into this to be sure that what I'm conveying to you is, in fact, accurate. But as it stands today, the information that's been provided to me when I asked for it indicates very clearly that right now you cannot go forward and frack in Ontario unless there's legislative change in the province of Ontario.

Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martow, Gila
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McDonell, Jim
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
McNaughton, Monte
Meilleur, Madeleine

Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Takhara, Harinder S.
Vernile, Daiene
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakubuski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

DEFERRED VOTES

PUBLIC SECTOR AND MPP ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION ET LA TRANSPARENCE DU SECTEUR PUBLIC ET DES DÉPUTÉS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 8, An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency by enacting the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 and amending various Acts / Projet de loi 8, Loi visant à promouvoir la responsabilisation et la transparence du secteur public et des députés par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur la rémunération des cadres du secteur parapublic et la modification de diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1135 to 1140.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats. All members, please take your seats.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Sergeant-at-Arms is coming for you.

On December 8, Ms. Matthews moved third reading of Bill 8. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bisson, Gilles
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne

Gélinas, France
Gretzky, Lisa
Hatfield, Percy
Horwath, Andrea
Mantha, Michael
Miller, Paul

Natyshak, Taras
Sattler, Peggy
Singh, Jagmeet
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 77; the nays are 17.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

ANNUAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2014 annual report of the Auditor General.

ANNUAL REPORT, PROVINCIAL ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2013-14 annual report of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to recognize a group of grade 10 students from St. Mary's high school in Woodstock, which, as you know, is in the great riding of Oxford. I was pleased to see them here this morning, and I want to welcome them to

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.

Gravelle, Michael
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Miltie
Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Kiwal, Sophie

Milczyn, Peter Z.
Miller, Norm
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Nicholls, Rick
Oraziotti, David
Pettapiece, Randy

Queen's Park, even though they had to go home before I had the opportunity to introduce them in the Legislature.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce two of our staff, who are here with us today: Laurie Orrett and Margo Duncan. Welcome to the House.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I would like to welcome Rick Firth and our former colleague Jennifer Mossop to the Legislature. I'm not sure they're here just yet, but they will be arriving shortly. They are here with 20 representatives from Hospice Palliative Care Ontario, who are here for their lobby day and have a reception this evening.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for members' statements. The member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills has the floor to make a statement.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KORY EARLE

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the patient introduction.

On Friday, November 14, my friend Kory Earle was elected president of People First of Canada. People First of Canada is the national non-profit organization representing people who have been labelled as having an intellectual disability. They advocate for the inclusion and protection of the civil rights of Canadians with intellectual disabilities.

Kory is the former first vice-president of People First of Canada; immediate past president of People First of Ontario; and former president, executive director, co-founder and honorary member of People First of Lanark County. Kory has made a positive impact, whatever his position, and no doubt will excel in his new leadership role, given his skills, experience, determination and vision.

I take this moment to say, "Congratulations, and all the best," to Kory as he embarks on his new role as president.

LAURIE ORRETT

Ms. Cindy Forster: Today, I rise to ask you to join me in wishing Laurie Orrett, a long-time New Democrat and a staff member for the New Democrats for 25 years here in the Legislature, who is in the members' gallery, a fond farewell as she moves into the next phase of her life.

In Laurie's words, "I have had the privilege and the honour to work for and with the most amazing group of people in this province," and I say that those people would say the same about Laurie.

In 1990, Laurie ran as the New Democrat candidate in York Centre against Greg Sorbara, and received the second-largest number of votes in Ontario in the historic 1990 election.

She then went to work for Margery Ward, the NDP MPP from Don Mills, who, sadly, passed away during her term.

She moved on to work for Gary Malkowski, NDP MPP for York East. He was Canada's first deaf parliamentarian, and the first in the world to actually address the Legislature in sign language.

In 1995, she went to work for Frances Lankin, who many of you will remember.

Following that, she went to work for Michael Prue, who kept Beaches-East York orange—in a landslide by-election—for the next 13 years. According to Laurie, her tenure with Michael was the best job she ever had.

So in June, when I was told that Laurie Orrett actually wanted to come and work for me, I thought I had won the lottery. Laurie is a warm, compassionate person. She has time for everyone. She is a great mentor for both staff and MPPs alike.

This is quite a career in the life cycle process.

She will now have some quality time to spend with her husband, John Orrett, a Toronto district fire chief; her daughter, Ashleigh; and her son, Jeffrey. Her daughter is getting married in February, so she'll have some time to plan that wedding; and she'll have a new son-in-law, Andrew Molinaro. But I'm sure she will continue to haunt the halls of Queen's Park on a regular basis because she's made so many friends here at Queen's Park—all parties, all staff in the Legislature.

On behalf of New Democrats and everyone here, Laurie, we wish you great success in your future path.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're not allowed to leave until you go to the Speaker's party this evening.

MILTON PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: This past Sunday afternoon, I had the pleasure of attending a wonderful concert by the newly founded Milton Philharmonic Orchestra. It was their first public performance and it was actually very lovely. Even though it was their first show, they played like seasoned professionals.

The performance took place at St. Paul's United Church. The room was packed and the performance didn't disappoint. It was incredible. The orchestra played everything from Tchaikovsky to Silent Night; it was a magical performance.

It was also wonderful to see such a diverse collection of people in the audience—music lovers, casual listeners, adults and children. Everyone was out to hear the Milton Philharmonic's first concert. It was a special afternoon and a great experience for the community.

Promoting arts and culture in our community engages residents, strengthens our local economy and allows talented people to share their gifts for the rest of us to enjoy.

After speaking with some of those who were on hand to listen, it was clear that the orchestra had produced something very special: the type of musical experience that can open our minds to new ideas and be a really uplifting force.

It was a truly enjoyable experience, and I look forward to hearing what this great collection of talented musicians will have in store for us next.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Industrial wind turbines are a part of the government of Ontario's green energy plan. The validity of this energy endeavour may be debatable, but care must be exercised when determining where to locate these monstrous, impeding turbines, especially when they have been constructed around airports.

I mention this not because of the rising energy costs throughout my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex, but because of safety concerns. It would appear to me that someone was asleep at the switch when eight industrial wind turbines were allowed to be built inside already-established airport zoning regulations at the Chatham-Kent Municipal Airport.

These airport zoning regulations—or AZRs, as they are known—were established for safety reasons to protect the pilots, passengers and families of those flying in and out of the airport. Long before I became Her Majesty's loyal opposition critic for community safety and correctional services, I challenged the location of these turbines because of safety concerns.

Industrial wind turbines are a big business with even bigger returns. So does money reign supreme over lives that are being put in danger daily? There are proponents who claim there is no danger. Those are merely personal opinions; these individuals are simply "blowing in the wind," pun intended. Their opinions are not scientifically or factually based.

You cannot put a value on life when it comes to safety. Safety must reign over profits and huge payouts. It's imperative that the right action be taken, regardless of precedent-setting.

I will continue to stand up for the people of my riding, encouraging all three levels of government to stand up and do the right thing in the precious name of safety. Failure to do so may result in body bags and huge lawsuits. No one wants this—not now, not ever.

SAMARA CANADA

Mr. Michael Mantha: Today I would like to speak about an organization I have just come to know that is doing excellent work across the country.

Samara Canada is dedicated to reconnecting citizens to politics. Established as a charity in 2009, they have become Canada's most trusted non-partisan champion of increased civic engagement and a more positive public life.

Samara Canada's research and educational program shines new light on Canada's democratic system, and encourages greater political participation across the country to build better politics and a better Canada for everyone.

1510

Every year they have a campaign called Everyday Political Citizen. Who are everyday political citizens, you might ask, Mr. Speaker? You probably know one.

As we know, many people across Ontario and the country are disengaging from politics. Some statistics suggest that 60% of people say they haven't even talked

face to face with someone about politics in the last year. Everyday political citizens are people who take the time to get a little bit political and make positive change in their community.

I had the pleasure of attending the awards ceremony last week. I met with one of the founders of Samara Canada, Michael MacMillan, and I was very impressed by the work they are doing across the country.

I encourage my colleagues here at Queen's Park to reach out to Samara and find ways to get involved. There are so many people out there working to build a better democracy in Canada. This is a great opportunity to recognize these people.

Samara Canada: Look them up.

ST. GABRIEL CATHOLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: What do a juggler, a stilt walker and three police motorcycles have to do with the first day of school at St. Gabriel Catholic Elementary School in my riding of Cambridge? Why, a special celebration of the first day in the life of a brand new school, of course.

I was there to join in the fun and was absolutely delighted to be invited back this past Sunday, December 7, for the official dedication of Cambridge's newest school. Teachers, students and families warmly welcomed the Catholic school board officials, school board trustees, Police Chief Bryan Larkin, Councillor Donna Reid and myself.

Bishop Crosby of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton presided over the blessing and dedication, and children were included in every part of the ceremony, including all of the music and prayers.

St. Gabriel school has already become a wonderful addition to Cambridge, quickly becoming a hub for the greater community. Students will make friendships and lasting connections with teachers and mentors that will empower them throughout all of their lives.

Our children and students deserve nothing but the best education that we can deliver. St. Gabriel school is an example of our government's commitment to build the best schools possible for our children, to help them reach their fullest potential.

Congratulations to principal Cheryl Casselman and to the teachers and staff of St. Gabriel school on their official opening.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise in this House today to speak to a very important issue that has affected residents of my riding, as well as those living and commuting between communities across rural and northern Ontario.

Over the past two winter seasons I have received hundreds of individual complaints through emails, calls, and walk-ins at my constituency offices, all concerned with the condition of highways and roadways throughout Parry Sound-Muskoka.

While considering the challenging amounts of snow-fall and persistently cold temperatures that were experienced at times, wide-ranging concerns have been raised to me regarding the amount of sand and salt used, the service delivery model and the new contract agreements.

I've had the opportunity to speak in this House in the past to question the new model for winter road maintenance, and I must say that with the experience so far this year, I maintain those concerns.

Yesterday, while debating Bill 31, I was able to voice some of the individual cases and personal experiences of poor road conditions. While fines were levied last year to contractors as a result of the poor road conditions, I believe that the current provincial model can be improved to help ensure conditions do not reach such a level in the future.

In February of last year I was particularly pleased that a motion was passed at the public accounts committee to task the Auditor General with investigating the program as a whole, as well as the contracts negotiated on behalf of the provincial government by the Ministry of Transportation.

I look forward to the findings of the auditor. This insight, along with advice from the contractors and the Ministry of Transportation, will undoubtedly help to improve the conditions that Ontario drivers face in Parry Sound–Muskoka and challenging areas throughout northern Ontario and across the province.

HAZEL MCCALLION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past week, the former mayor of Mississauga, Hazel McCallion, best known as Hurricane Hazel, entered a new phase of her life after 36 years of distinguished public service.

Over the past several years, I had the privilege to work with her in respect to many projects and issues relating to my riding of Mississauga–Brampton South and the region of Peel. I found that even in her nineties, age was no impediment to Hazel's alertness, energy, and optimism.

She believes—and I agree—that being a woman cannot be and should not be a barrier to success. I heard her say, "What really matters is how hard you work and how determined you are to reach your goals and fulfill your dreams."

The new mayor of Mississauga, Bonnie Crombie, described Hazel's legacy: "Hazel McCallion has taken our city from farm fields and fruit trees to the sixth-largest city in Canada and an economic powerhouse in North America." For that, I thank Hazel and wish her all the best.

HALTON McMASTER FAMILY HEALTH CENTRE

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Friday, November 28 was a great day in my riding of Burlington, as I had the opportunity to attend the official opening of the Halton

McMaster Family Health Centre. Along with the leadership team from Joseph Brant Hospital, members of the clinical staff and city officials, I toured this state-of-the-art facility, which will, by its very design, connect patients to the right care in the right place at the right time.

As soon as you enter the centre, you realize it is truly focused on patient-centred care. From the calming decor, including the beautiful aquariums in the lobby, to the use of technology to facilitate patient/clinician interaction, no detail is spared.

With support from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and other partners, the centre has another important benefit: It will increase the number of family medicine residents trained in Burlington and the region of Halton. Developing this capacity will create an environment in Burlington that will encourage medical residents trained in our community to stay and practise in our community afterwards.

Mr. Speaker, one of the pillars of our government's action plan for health care is to deliver faster access and a stronger link to family health care. I'm so pleased that the Halton McMaster Family Health Centre will help us make progress on this goal by building capacity for patients in my riding of Burlington.

The centre's focus on interdisciplinary medicine and training will mean patients can stay healthier, get connected to the right care and are less likely to visit the hospital. This will also facilitate the sharing of best practices, ensuring that ideas are shared between clinicians to the benefit of patients.

The centre will also help achieve another one of our government's goals.

It's a welcome addition to our health care community in Burlington, and I congratulate the Halton McMaster Family Health Centre on this initiative.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated December 9, 2014, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Ms. Soo Wong: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 7, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'obligation de faire rapport concernant la réduction des fardeaux administratifs et la Loi de 2014 sur les partenariats pour la création d'emplois et la croissance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 27, 2014, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 35, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated December 3, 2014, the bill is ordered for third reading.

1520

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

UTILITY TASK AND ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LES AUTOQUADS ET LES VÉHICULES POLYVALENTS

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 58, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to utility task and all-terrain vehicles / Projet de loi 58, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les autoquads et les véhicules polyvalents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Norm Miller: I did introduce a similar bill in the last few weeks. This is a slightly corrected version to address two-up ATVs. I'll just read the explanatory note.

"Utility Task and All-Terrain Vehicles Act, 2014: The Highway Traffic Act is amended to provide that no person shall drive an off-road vehicle on a highway except in accordance with the stated exceptions. One of the exceptions is that a utility task vehicle may be driven on any highway on which an all-terrain vehicle may be driven, and that any regulations or bylaws applicable to all-terrain vehicles also apply to utility task vehicles.

"A utility task vehicle is defined as an off-road vehicle meeting certain specifications, including the specification that the vehicle is designed to carry a driver and one or more passengers."

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak further on the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014, which I introduced yesterday in the House.

In the months since I've taken on the role of Associate Minister of Finance, I have been able to engage extensively with Ontarians about their retirement income system. What I can say is that through my conversations with business and labour, organizations and associations, families and communities, there is consensus that there is a real undersavings problem. I'm pleased to speak to this legislation, legislation that would, if passed, help address this problem, close the gap and help give Ontarians the retirement futures they deserve.

Study after study tells us that a significant portion of Canadians are not saving enough to maintain their standard of living in retirement. The reasons for this undersavings problem are many. Pension coverage is low. Fewer than 35% of Ontario workers have a workplace-based pension plan. At the same time, people are not taking full advantage of retirement savings vehicles. In 2012, there was about \$280 billion in unused RRSP room in Ontario. Even for those who do manage to save, high management fees, low interest rates and unpredictable market performance have led to lower returns. As well, people are living longer. This puts pressure on people's personal savings to stretch even further.

On an individual level, this lack of adequate savings is of great concern, but it has the potential to compromise our shared goals as well. When a growing portion of the population faces inadequate savings, they will spend less in the future when they retire. This, in turn, will slow consumption and growth and put pressure on publicly funded programs. This is not good for people. This is not good for business. This is not good for Ontario's

economy. That's why we need to take action now for the future.

Mr. Speaker, Canada and Ontario have a strong retirement income system built on programs like the Canada Pension Plan. We believe this is an efficient and effective retirement savings program. However, it does not provide enough retirement income for Ontarians to fill the savings gap. These individuals are at risk of not saving enough to maintain their standard of living in retirement.

As you know, our preferred solution is still an enhancement to the Canada Pension Plan. Our government has been advocating for this since 2010, with the Premier and the finance minister leading national conversations on the issue. But despite agreement from all provinces and territories to continue discussions on CPP enhancement, the federal government has unilaterally shut down any and all discussions on this issue.

We know the cost of inaction is simply too high, Mr. Speaker. A declining standard of living has the potential to slow consumption and growth in our economy. At the same time, it means more people would be dependent on publicly funded social services.

But in the absence of leadership at the federal level, our government is taking action to ensure Ontarians have the secure retirement future they deserve. So we are proceeding with a made-in-Ontario solution. This is why we have introduced the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014. This act is a major step forward in establishing the ORPP. If passed, it would require the government of Ontario to establish the ORPP no later than January 1, 2017. It would also require that the Minister of Finance or another member of the executive council introduce a bill that provides for the operation of the plan, the administration and investment management of the plan through an administrative entity and the basic requirements of the plan, including those set out in the schedule to the act. The legislation would also require the establishment of an administrative entity to administer the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and specify some of the administrative entity's duties. And this act would require the government to introduce further legislation detailing the plan's terms, operational requirements and compliance system of the ORPP.

Let me tell you a few highlights about the plan itself. Building on the strengths of the CPP, the ORPP would assist those most at risk of undersaving. The ORPP would expand pension coverage initially to more than three million working Ontarians, helping to supplement their retirement income by ensuring a predictable stream of income in retirement. The ORPP would aim to provide a replacement rate of 15% of an individual's earnings up to a maximum annual earnings threshold. Combined with CPP, this would supplement voluntary savings measures and ensure a secure retirement income floor for life.

The ORPP would be mandatory for all eligible employees working in Ontario who do not currently benefit from a comparable workplace pension plan. It would require contributions to be shared equally between employers and employees, with each contributing not

more than 1.9% of salaries and wages between the minimum and the maximum earnings thresholds.

As well, ORPP benefits would be earned as contributions are made, ensuring the system is fair and younger generations are not burdened with additional costs associated with older workers' benefits. By pooling longevity and investment risk, members would be able to benefit from a cost-effective approach to investment management.

Responding to a decline in workplace pension plans and an increasingly mobile workforce, the ORPP would allow plan members to contribute to and accumulate benefits as they move between employers participating in the plan. This is especially important in addressing the changing nature of our workforce. Young workers are expected to change employers, careers even, multiple times throughout their lives. This feature of the plan means that eligible workers will be able to build a pension, even if they change employers often during their working life or if they work at more than one job at a time, when their employers do not offer a comparable workplace plan.

The reality is that today the cost and administration involved in certain workplace pension plans has made it difficult, if not impossible, for some employers to offer them. The ORPP allows employers, who may not otherwise be able to offer their employees the opportunity to contribute and accumulate benefits, to help them save for their retirement years.

The ORPP will be administered by an entity at arm's length from the government. The entity will collect contributions and invest them, and it will administer the benefits.

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The assets of the ORPP will be managed for the benefit of the workers and members of the plan and will not be included as part of overall government revenues.

Finally, by pooling longevity and investment risk, the ORPP can provide members a cost-effective approach to investment management.

Of course, there are some who worry about how the ORPP would impact businesses. Let me assure you, Mr. Speaker: We're taking steps to help minimize those impacts. For instance, enrolment would occur in stages, starting with the largest employers, and contribution rates would be phased in over two years. This would especially assist small businesses with the transition and help lessen the short-term impact. And we are committed to introducing the ORPP in 2017 to coincide with the expected reductions in employment insurance premiums.

We know that employees who feel more secure about their own futures tend to be more productive. More than that, we know that business owners care about the well-being of the people who work for them. The ORPP would be a cost-effective way of helping workers achieve a secure retirement income floor they can rely on so that all of us can rest assured about our collective futures.

In the end, we need to take action now to support our economy in the long term. David Dodge, former

governor of the Bank of Canada, has said that any short-term costs of this enhancement to our retirement system would be offset by the long-term gains to the economy.

As I stated earlier, Mr. Speaker, the introduction of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014, is the first step in the process to establish this plan. Throughout this process, we are working closely with businesses, labour, organizations and associations, as well as individuals, families and communities across the province as we develop the design and approach to the ORPP. More formal consultations will begin in 2015 to ensure that the ORPP properly balances retirement income security with any impact on business and meets the needs of a 21st-century workforce. I'm travelling to the four corners of the province and I'm listening to what all Ontarians have to say about the ORPP.

We're also working with our Technical Advisory Group on Retirement Security, gaining from their expertise. I want to thank these individuals for their advice, opinions and support: Keith Ambachtsheer, Susan Eng, Murray Gold, Melissa Kennedy, Jim Keohane, Bill Morneau and Barbara Zvan. As well, I am very pleased that Mr. Michael Nobrega, a former CEO of OMERS, will be advising us on implementation. It's through these conversations that we'll be able to design the best plan possible for the people of Ontario.

The ORPP is an integral part of the government's four-part plan to invest in people and help working families build a more secure retirement future. Passing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014, is an important step in strengthening the retirement income system in our province. I am asking the members of this assembly to support this important legislation for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the introduction by the Associate Minister of Finance on the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

When I look at this, there are obviously some initiatives that are important, but one of the things that this fails to look at is the need for jobs in this province. As a caucus, we have raised the issue and many, many questions and comments about the need for jobs and that that is more important at this point than a provincial retirement plan. The reason I say that is that for every one of those people who is unemployed—they are not eligible for any kind of pension. So I think we have to understand that immediately: We aren't having a conversation with all Ontarians; we're having a conversation with those who are currently employed.

When you look at the size of the province and its workforce, it's about seven million people, but amongst those will be the broader public sector, who would not be part of this proposal, and we have a group in the private sector who are called those with "comparable pensions," and we have no idea how many people that includes. So when we talk about—and the minister referred to—

millions of people, I would suggest that, in fact, there are a number, obviously, who would benefit, I guess, but it's certainly not clear-cut on the number of people we're talking about.

One of the other messages that the government responds to in explaining this piece of legislation is to compare it with CPP. I think there are some very important exceptions to that notion, one of which is the fact that CPP is universal, so it includes a base of an entire country. As I've just suggested, this pension plan would be a fairly narrow group of people.

The Canada pension, which was enacted in 1965, took 10 years to transition into its full responsibility. Clearly, the government has talked about the deadline of enabling legislation as 2017, but we're not clear on when the cheques would actually be rolled out.

The final point, I think, that needs to be made in comparing it with the CPP in a manner different than the government is the fact that CPP has built its resources on not only the contributions of the members but also the kinds of investments that they have made. Those investments, in many cases, are factored at a rate of return of 6% to 8%. In today's financial reality, we're nowhere near that kind of number.

The bill itself is enabling legislation. What that means, from what I hear, is that it's consultation by invitation, and obviously not a public process. I think that on something that is so potentially influential, we certainly need to start out with something that has a little more transparency.

In the few moments that I have left to speak, I want to just talk about the burden that this puts on the private sector. Small business has been pleading with this government for some months, through its organizations and papers they've published—on the burden of the 1.9% that would be their payroll tax.

Pensions were created when there was a strong economy, when people in the private sector were able to provide money for that. Today they are concerned about the hydro bill. They're concerned about meeting their obligations to their employees and their customers. They are concerned about the amount of red tape that eats up non-billable hours. For them, this is a huge burden.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the statement by the Associate Minister of Finance.

Yesterday the government introduced two pieces of pension legislation, and I am going to take this opportunity to speak a bit about both.

In this chamber, we do disagree on a lot of things. We disagree on what should be done, we disagree on when it should be done and, most often, we disagree on how we're going to go about doing it. But there are a few things we can all agree upon, and I think that one of them is that Ontarians deserve the right to retire with dignity. We may disagree on the details, but ultimately we all agree on the importance of retirement security. So I am pleased to be able to stand in this proud Legislature and speak about a progressive and vital topic: pensions.

Coming out of the public sector, specifically education, I know the value of a pension. Pensioners know the value of a pension, and those who work and wonder how they will survive or thrive after their working years also know the value of a pension. As New Democrats, we have always and will always continue to believe that all Ontarians should have access to a strong defined benefit pension plan, and for those who don't have one, it is our duty, as representatives of this province, to provide it.

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We want Ontarians to have good pensions, but let's talk about what a good pension really is. A pension is a safe, protected, low-cost vehicle for individuals to not only save money, but for employers to add to that savings, and for that protected savings to grow and eventually provide benefits and financial predictability and security into retirement.

Life doesn't stop at retirement. People will want to know that there is money and that they have health and wellness support as they age and improve.

Defined contribution plans are insufficient in terms of providing for pensioners, and they are more costly to the system in the long term. The shift from defined benefit to defined contribution is turning out to have been a short-sighted, corporate-driven, costly shift. As reports like Brown and McInnes's *Shifting Public Sector DB Plans to DC: The Experience So Far and Implications for Canada*, and HOOPP's report *The Advantages of Defined Benefit Pension Plans: Independent Research and Case Studies*—as these reports are coming to light, we are seeing the benefit—pardon the pun—in prioritizing DB plans over DC plans. Our hope is the government will take counsel from those who are writing the reports and who actually—and actuarially—know about designing pensions.

The government consistently speaks about voluntary options and their role in supporting Ontarians in their retirement. Well, we support options, and we support Ontarians. We will have a lot of conversation about what plans are comparable and which groups are going to be exempt.

However, let's have this conversation: Let's give those who are exempt and looking for voluntary savings options a viable, low-cost way to contribute both to the success of the ORPP and their own retirement security. The more people in the plan, the more money in the pool; and the more money in the pool, the more security and benefit for pensioners. We can talk about who will be exempt, but let's also talk about who will be able to participate or opt in.

If this government is truly committed to the idea of helping Ontarians plan for and afford their futures, if they truly believe in retirement security and stability, then they should be leading with public pensions and not with the PRPPs, which send pensioner savings to banks and insurance companies through high fees with low transparency and both accumulation and decumulation fees.

Hard-working Ontarians are going to retire eventually, and two thirds of Ontarians do not have a workplace

pension. They deserve to work and retire with dignity. As I've said before, banks and big business are doing just fine, and they are not planning to retire any time soon.

I imagine the government has immense pressure from the banks and insurance companies to make changes to grow their industry. I'm not interested in standing in the way of business, but we are interested in workers and families and in the average individual who is trying to get by and, hopefully, get ahead.

The Bay Street lobby groups are likely to be quiet for a while, now that the government is rolling out their promised PRPP legislation so far ahead of any real ORPP legislation. As I learned from the Ministry of Finance at estimates committee, there will be three pieces of ORPP legislation. The first, as we see here, is little more than a shell game by the government to distract Ontarians from the private option that the government has tabled to appease the banks and insurance companies.

There is a lot of work to be done. As I stated earlier, we all agree on the importance of retirement security. But as we all know, the devil is in the details, so we will look forward to seeing more of the details of this plan and we will fight to ensure that the plan is strong, progressive and available to as many Ontarians as possible.

As a New Democrat, I know the value of a strong defined benefit pension, and we hope that the government does too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Oshawa and all members for their statements. It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Whereas the billion-dollar gas plant scandal, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020;

“Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, particularly in rural Ontario, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

“Whereas home heating and electricity are essential for families in rural Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government's mismanagement;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario's power consumers, including

families, farmers, and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity.”

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Ethan.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario does not have a strategy on Lyme disease; and

“Whereas the Public Health Agency of Canada is developing an Action Plan on Lyme Disease; and

“Whereas Toronto Public Health says that transmission of the disease requires the tick to be attached for 24 hours, so early intervention and diagnosis is of primary importance; and

“Whereas a motion was introduced to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario encouraging the government to adopt a strategy on Lyme disease, while taking into account the impact the disease has upon individuals and families in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to develop an integrated strategy on Lyme disease consistent with the action plan of the Public Health Agency of Canada, taking into account available treatments, accessibility issues and the efficacy of the currently available diagnostic mechanisms. In doing so, it should consult with representatives of the health care community and patients’ groups within one year.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and present it to page Vida to bring down to the Clerks.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It is entitled “Fluoridate All Ontario Drinking Water” and is passed to me by a number of very concerned people. It reads as follows:

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading cause of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable

to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I wholeheartedly sign and endorse this petition, and I’ll send it down with page Mikaila.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

“Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

“Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

“Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research.”

I fully support it and will affix my name and send it with page Ella.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

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"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data shows that there are more than 30,000 Ontarians waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

"Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care, e.g., to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase this funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

"Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

"(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

"(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will develop a process of registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers."

I share this on behalf of the people of Niagara. I will sign it and give it to page Albany.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition for an east Toronto French secondary school, grades 7 to 12, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

"Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto (Beaches-East York and Toronto-Danforth) and those numbers continue to grow; and

"Whereas there is no French secondary school (grades 7-12) yet in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school, while several English schools in east Toronto sit half-empty since there are no requirements or incentives for school boards to release underutilized schools to other boards in need; and

"Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 7 and 9 due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools, and that it is also well established that being educated in French at the

elementary level is not sufficient to solidify French-language skills for life; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even provided funds to open some secondary schools, and yet, not a single French secondary school has opened in east Toronto; and

"Whereas the commissioner of French-language services stated in a report in June 2011 that '... time is running out to address the serious shortage of at least one new French-language school at the secondary level in the eastern part of the city of Toronto'; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education and that the various components of our education system should be aligned to serve the needs of students; and

"Whereas parents and students from both French Catholic and French public elementary schools in east Toronto are prepared to find common ground across all language school systems to secure space for a French-language secondary school in east Toronto;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education assist one or both French school boards in locating a suitable underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary school (grades 7-12) in the community by September 2015, so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live."

I agree with this petition, affix my name to it and give it to patient page Tyler to bring to the front.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

"Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

"Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

"Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

"Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research."

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Nicole.

PRIX DE L'ESSENCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: C'est une pétition qui me parvient de partout dans le nord de l'Ontario :

« Alors que les automobilistes du nord de l'Ontario continuent d'être soumis à des fluctuations marquées dans le prix de l'essence; et

« Alors que la province pourrait éliminer les prix abusifs et opportunistes et offrir des prix justes, stables et prévisibles; et

« Alors que cinq provinces et de nombreux états américains ont déjà une réglementation des prix d'essence; et

« Considérant que les juridictions qui réglementent le prix de l'essence ont : moins de fluctuations des prix, moins d'écart de prix entre les communautés urbaines et rurales et des prix d'essence annualisés inférieurs ... »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« D'accorder à la Commission de l'énergie de l'Ontario le mandat de surveiller le prix de l'essence partout en Ontario afin de réduire la volatilité des prix et les différences de prix régionales, tout en encourageant la concurrence. »

J'appuie cette pétition et je demande à Ethan de l'amener aux greffiers.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. You'll be pleased to know it's not relating to French schools in my neighbourhood.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

I agree with this petition. I sign my name and leave it with page Jenny.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for certain energy sources, including the world's highest subsidies for solar power; and

"Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through the global adjustment, which can account for almost half of a ratepayer's hydro bill; and

"Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impacting the quality of life of Ontario's residents, especially fixed-income seniors; and

"Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mismanagement in the energy sector by implementing immediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009, and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates and abolishing expensive surcharges such as the global adjustment and debt retirement charges."

I fully support this petition, will sign it and send it with page Joshua.

VISITORS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order: the member from Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. As you know, sir, this is a day where members of the hospice communities across Ontario are visiting and saying hello. I see two representatives who were meeting earlier with the member from Niagara Falls, and I just want to say: Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Technical, that is not a point of order, but we do fully recognize and appreciate the fact that you have brought that to our attention.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAFEGUARDING HEALTH CARE INTEGRITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 DE SAUVEGARDE DE L'INTÉGRITÉ DES SOINS DE SANTÉ

Mr. Bradley, on behalf of Mr. Hoskins, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to safeguard health care integrity by enacting the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014 and by amending certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions / Projet de loi 21, Loi visant à sauvegarder l'intégrité des soins de santé par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur le don de sang volontaire et la modification de certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Bradley.

Hon. James J. Bradley: This proposed legislation essentially consists of two parts. First, this new statute would clearly and unequivocally prohibit paying people for blood and plasma donations. Canadian Blood Services would be exempt from this prohibition so that they may pay blood and plasma donors if they deem such a measure to be necessary. This is in line with the commission of inquiry led by Justice Horace Krever that recommended measures to ensure that donors of blood and plasma not be paid except in exceptional circumstances.

Our revisions also make it clear that researchers would be exempt from the prohibition against paying for blood donations when the collected blood is being used exclusively for research purposes like clinical trials.

The proposed legislation will also strengthen our regulatory enforcement tools so we can take swift and decisive action in case of violations. We are taking this action in order to maintain the integrity of our public, volunteer blood collection system in Canada.

The second part of the bill would amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act, so that the Ontario College of Pharmacists can inspect and license all hospital pharmacies operating in Ontario as a means to ensure that hospital pharmacies meet the appropriate standards set by the college.

At the same time, we are making amendments to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, and the Public Hospitals Act, that would enhance communications among health care system partners, including health regulatory colleges, public hospitals and others, to strengthen oversight of health care practitioners and better protect patients.

With this legislation, we will be able to act decisively to protect the integrity of our current blood donation system and our hospital pharmacy services.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to speak to the bill this afternoon. I sat in the social policy committee last week. We actually had 20 deputations, many people for the bill and many people concerned with some pieces of the bill. It was very informative to sit through that. Certainly, what I found sitting through was that there were a lot of different aspects to take into account. I'm going to try to share those with the folks here today in the room.

I'm going to start off with the folks—there were a number of people in the deputations that were very personal stories to people, who were directly affected by the tainted blood scandal. Some 30,000 people were infected with HIV and hepatitis C. There was \$17 million spent on an exhaustive federal inquiry, and \$5 billion has been paid in compensation, and sadly, thousands have died.

One of the presenters lost her uncle to AIDS. She had some strong suggestions for us, including: "Our domestic blood system cannot sustain any competition regardless of what private companies want to use it for, whether it is research or for export to make medications. It is the sole responsibility of Canadian Blood Services to collect blood and plasma in our country. Exploiting the vulnerable is not a shared Canadian value and we must make great efforts to stop commodifying human tissue."

The Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario support only a self-sufficient national blood system comprised of altruistic donations.

I think, though, we ought to engage more and hear from more groups in order to get this right, Mr. Speaker. We're talking about the security of our future blood supply.

I want to preface most of what I'm going to say today: Absolutely, I think that anyone in this House takes this responsibility very seriously. The health and safety of the people we are given the privilege to represent have to always be the absolute key, and I certainly went into those discussions—even the deputations, when I was asking questions—with the mindset that we, of course, would have all of the safety and health regulations built in that we would have in our existing system.

I stood in this House very frequently and spoke of those people who voluntarily give blood. It is a very safe system, and I think, certainly, that we would expect nothing less than that as we go forward; whether it's for plasma protein or transfusion, we still have to maintain extremely rigorous standards of safety and health to ensure that everyone has that going forward.

We have to worry about that future blood supply. I found a lot of interesting pieces of information which I'm going to share in my talk today, both for and against the bill the way that it's currently proposed. I think that what we want to do is to find a healthy balance; if not, we face the risk of failure to provide for patients who may need that medication.

I spoke with one mother. Whose son needs blood protein products for his actual life. Currently a lot of the

blood that's imported for plasma and protein, about 70%, is coming from the United States, and it certainly is paid and unpaid; it's a combination. I asked that mom very directly in a conversation after the deputation, "Do you really care, at the end of the day, whether it's paid or unpaid if it's going to be the life-saving medication needed for your son?" She said no.

Certainly I think her preference would be that there not be paid if there was that ability, but I'm not certain that anyone in this room, as legislators, can guarantee that supply. When I look at this issue, I certainly come from that perspective: that we have to have diligence; we have a responsibility to ensure that there is a safe supply, both for transfusions and also, significantly, those who need plasma protein products.

I understand, certainly, why some people are strongly opposed to any paid plasma donations. There is that concern, particularly if we go back to the generation of HIV, when we had the tainted blood scandal. Certainly no one wants us to go back to that day, but I think we also heard in that room that a lot of technology has changed and a lot of rigorous programs and services have been put in place to ensure that a supply and a safe system are in place to ensure that happens.

The system no doubt failed back in the 1980s. In fact, it failed 30,000 people and killed thousands of Canadians. To them, the primary objective is a permanent, voluntary, unpaid blood donation system in Ontario, per the Krever commission. As I referenced earlier, a lot of money was spent on that Krever commission, to try to ensure that that can never happen, and certainly none of us want that to happen going down the road.

But to all of us, I think we have to look at this as—we need a stable, secure and sustainable blood supply. I found it interesting that a number of the presenters that day shared with us that sometimes enough product for one patient for one year requires hundreds, sometimes over a thousand, donations of blood to be able to get the quantities that they need for their purposes. To a person who requires such medication, this is a life-saving situation.

It is my responsibility to ensure that there is enough supply to meet that demand, and it's certainly something that I take very seriously. I did certainly enjoy all of the time in that committee hearing from the various presenters, trying to look at it from a balanced perspective and asking, "How can we do it to try to ensure that we have a safe and sustainable blood supply system for all of the people out there?" There certainly are lots of emotions with this issue, and it was certainly very interesting to hear all of the presenters.

The committee heard from the association representing collectors of source plasma and the manufacturers of plasma protein therapeutics. They were endorsed by the National Hemophilia Foundation, and I found it very interesting.

There's a group called the Network of Rare Blood Disorder Organizations, known as NRBDO, and they referenced, as well, the Dublin Consensus Statement of

2011. Participants in that include—are not limited to, but include—the European Hemophilia Consortium, the Irish Haemophilia Society, the World Federation of Hemophilia, the International Plasma Fractionation Association, the International Society of Blood Transfusion, the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations and the National Blood Authority of Australia.

It was interesting—I'm going to quote from some of the summary—that at this time, when they had their meeting and this coalition of organizations got together to speak about this—"We submit that paying Ontarians is no more or less ethical than paying Americans, as we do today for most of the plasma-derived medicinal products used in Ontario and across Canada....

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"In 2014, the member organizations of the NRBDO endorsed a background document and a policy developed by the Canadian Hemophilia Society ... that similarly acknowledged the role of both paid and unpaid donation systems for producing an adequate supply of plasma for the manufacture of medicinal products. The NRBDO, therefore, believes that Bill 21, by forbidding payment for plasma donation, fails to promote the best interests of patients who need plasma-derived medical products."

Speaker, I took that to heart, that there is concern out there by groups that are very intent on following this very closely—they're obviously much more knowledgeable than I'll ever be on this. But I think we need to ensure that we can do that, and if there's not a guarantee of supply through a voluntary system, then I think we have to be open to it. We can regulate. We can make sure there are all the safety precautions, but I think we do need to give at least that opportunity to be discovered.

We also heard from the life sciences sector, companies on the frontier of designing life-saving therapeutics. That's one of the things that I certainly see—I presented a petition earlier today with the mention of Alzheimer's. It's one of those that I think is coming through and it's a huge tsunami that's coming at us, to use that term, to show the significance of what I believe is coming at us, and we need to be developing therapies and, hopefully, some medications that are going to be able to help that—and, at some point, I truly hope it can cure it—and we're going to need that blood plasma protein to be able to do that.

We need to encourage innovation. Currently, it's happening all over the world, paid donations. Part of me says, "Why would we not want to be a leader? Canadians are great—the BlackBerry, the arm on our spaceship"—

Mr. Todd Smith: Canadarm.

Mr. Bill Walker: Canadarm. Thank you to my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings—always here helping me out, a valued colleague—

Mr. Todd Smith: I try. I do my best.

Mr. Bill Walker: —who is very much a colleague and a help.

We have that ability, Mr. Speaker, and I do think it's something, again, to be open-minded as Canadians and Ontarians specifically, that we want to be leading

innovation. We want to be at the forefront, particularly of health care and things that are going to be able to help the greater masses of people we serve.

These medicinal applications treat a variety of rare and serious genetic diseases: emphysema, immune deficiency and bleeding disorders. Everyone wants that to be a safe supply and to have a supply that we can have, both to serve as medication but also for those research-based, innovative opportunities. They want to ensure they can continue to import for manufacturing purposes.

One person in the committee said, "What's the difference? You're buying it now from the States, 70% which could be paid. What's the difference of paying a fellow Canadian who may wish to actually have a paid donation?" It's great to, again, say that we want voluntary only, but at the end of the day we need to ensure that that supply is there.

A very specific life sciences company, Complex Biologics, is looking to invest another \$200 million to expand their work. Not to make light of the situation, but I want to just reach out to the government across the floor—perhaps that is a company that could fill up the empty MaRS building right now and help them out with one of their challenges over there on the revenue side of the ledger, Mr. Speaker.

I found this very, very informative: Dr. Graham Sher, who has been the head of Canadian Blood Services for 15 years, was one of the presenters. I found his information shared to be very enlightening. To be honest, Mr. Speaker, when I first heard of him coming in, I thought he would only want the exact system that we have today, but he was actually very open-minded and balanced in his approach, saying, "We need to explore. We need to look at that."

I'm going to quote a little bit of information that he shared with us. He assured us that our patients are "100% sufficient in blood for transfusion purposes." That's wonderful news, currently. That's a great thing, and I applaud, again, all of the people at Canadian Blood Services for the work they do and, more importantly, those volunteers who come out and give their blood—I'll use their slogan, "It's in you to give." I'm one of those proud people, as many people in this House are, who can and are able. I think that's wonderful.

The opposite side of that ledger, though—which he shared with us—is we're nowhere near sufficient with plasma protein products, hence our heavy reliance on importation. We are unlike the United States to the south of us, which has a surplus in blood plasma proteins and collects 24 million litres a year.

Dr. Sher testified that we're currently not meeting patient needs in this aspect: "We are not sufficient in meeting patient needs for a number of these drugs—not just the immunoglobulin drugs, but also albumin." To become self-sufficient in plasma collection, we need to quadruple our collection to 850,000 litres annually. Again, it's great to say we think we can have a voluntary system that would do that, but what if we don't? What if we can't do that on a voluntary basis? And that family

that I alluded to earlier, that young child that needs that medicine—how do you look in that mom's eyes and say, "There is a solution, there is a way we can do this, but our legislation is going to prevent us from paid donations"?

Yet, again, we're doing it through the States. We're currently buying now. So I'm a little bit challenged on this one, Mr. Speaker, because I can't really understand how we can accept it on this hand but we're going to say "absolutely not" when it's from a Canadian in our country, an Ontarian who may wish to do that.

My research is still going out there to try find more information and see where I will land on this.

Some would suggest you can't do it on a voluntary system alone. No country can do it, especially not a country as vast as ours. One of our colleagues, I think France Gélinas, mentioned that one of the clinics was closed in—Thunder Bay, I think it was. Again, it's interesting that we know we have a need, we know we have nowhere near the ability to provide, and yet we're closing a clinic there. That was one troubling fact that I heard, and I wonder why we have done that and why we're not taking other actions to ensure there is more supply.

Again, that's where I think this came up: in regard to a company wanting to come into our great province to provide that service right here in our own backyard.

Dr. Sher also shared with us that all countries have co-existent systems. "Virtually every country in the world depends on the paid commercial industry to meet patient needs. Patient groups support this."

Both systems can be safe. "Paying donors is not an issue of safety. Decades of evidence have proven that drugs made from plasma derivatives today are inordinately safe and just as safe as those made from volunteer donors. This is not the 1980s, and 20 years of advanced science and technical improvements have made these products extremely safe."

To balance both systems would cost us too much. "It will require enormous public expenditures for Canada to be 100% self-sufficient in plasma, and in fact that would be a risk strategy, putting all our eggs in a single basket.... Without access to these products, a great percentage of Canadian patients would not get the care that they need."

Most importantly, "Patients ... in this country are receiving products from paid donors, which today, in the current day and age, are extremely safe products."

Finally, "We have to recognize that a safe, successful and necessary commercial plasma industry coexists with the voluntary blood industry side by side, and we really do need to recognize that patients depend on both systems in order to provide products for their care. We're not talking about paying blood donors." It's more for the plasma protein, not for donors for transfusion purposes.

As I said earlier, there's a lot of challenge in regard to the emotion in this. There are people who have lost loved ones, and I certainly empathize with every single one of those. We would never, ever want to go back and have a repeat of that happen here.

Again, I'm going to use the fact sheet that was given to us: "Canadian Blood Services does not pay individuals to donate blood. The organization operates a volunteer system for blood donation in Canada. Canadian Blood Services collects and separates donated blood into components (red blood cells, platelets and plasma) for transfusion into patients.

"The safety of blood components is assured through a multi-tiered process, including rigorous donor screening, transmissible disease testing, and product manipulation."

From my perspective, I would expect that exact same standard to be there for plasma protein purposes. If someone is going to donate for that, they would have to go extremely through that. I believe, when this is happening in other places around the world, and certainly south of the border, that there have to be all of those types of safety systems in place now. No one is going to want to allow blood to come through just willy-nilly and go into a system for those, because again the same life-risk concern is there, Mr. Speaker.

"Plasma for transfusion is plasma that is directly transfused into patients for treating clotting abnormalities and bleeding.

"Canada is 100% sufficient in plasma for transfusion—meaning patient demand is completely met within the country.

"All donors in this process are Canadian volunteers. They are not paid for their donations."

They go on to talk about plasma for fractionation. "Plasma for fractionation is plasma that is manufactured (or fractionated) into pharmaceutical drugs. These drugs are used to treat conditions such as immune disorders, bleeding disorders, and trauma and burn injuries.

"Canada, like many other countries, is not self-sufficient in plasma for fractionation. The demand for these products is increasing as new therapies are identified. For some patients, these products are life-saving treatments for which there are no alternatives."

Again, I go back to that point: We need to ensure we have a reliable, adequate supply when we need it. We can't be saying, "Oh, well, we'll get to it. Although we failed in the voluntary side, we'll try to find it." We need to ensure that that's there for that patient who needs it today.

"Broadly speaking, Canadian Blood Services meets patient demand for plasma products in two ways:

"(1) It collects plasma from volunteer Canadian donors. To this supply it adds voluntarily donated plasma purchased from the United States. This material is sent to two fractionation companies (one in the United States and one in Europe). The finished products are returned to Canada for distribution to hospitals. This process meets approximately 30% of the overall patient need for intravenous immunoglobulins, or IVIG, a broadly used plasma protein product.

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"(2) It must also purchase a variety of other plasma products from the international commercial plasma industry, which does pay its donors and has done so for decades."

I think one of the things that I remember Dr. Sher saying is that every country needs a pay option except the US, but safety is prevalent in every one of those, and there are people all over the world benefiting from this life-saving, life-altering medication that allows them to live the life they need.

"Plasma protein products:

"Most of the world's supply of plasma products comes from paid donors. This is known and accepted by patient groups around the world.

"More than two decades of clinical experience show that drugs derived from paid donors are as safe"—as safe, Mr. Speaker—"as those manufactured from unpaid donors.

"Because the growth in demand for these drugs continues to rise, it is not economically feasible for Canada to be 100% sufficient in Canadian plasma collected for fractionation."

So one of the challenges, again, that we certainly heard in those couple of days of committee was that we are having increasing demand certainly in the need for the number of products that are out there, but also from our research, because of what I said earlier, with a lot of our seniors' population and the need for more medications to deal with the diseases that we're seeing in our world these days, and the risk strategy is becoming a challenge. We need to be prepared for that risk. Whether it's blood for transfusion or the protein products used for life-saving medication, this is not something that we can put off into the future. This isn't something that we can just wish to happen. From my perspective, when I was in that committee for two days listening intently, it was, "How do we strike a balance to ensure that we're going to have those supplies when we need them?"

As I said earlier, I tried to come at this as a very balanced thought process. I want to ensure that we have both the absolutely safest system in the world for anyone who is going to donate blood, to ensure that all people have that safety as their number one concern, but we also need to ensure that we have the ability to supply demand, particularly on the side of plasma protein for medications and therapeutic realities that we need for new, innovative cures for diseases like cancer, like emphysema, like dementia and Alzheimer's that we continually talk about and need to think about even more.

I want to assure the people who are listening out there that I certainly came to that table with an open mind. I tried to ensure that I listened to every single presenter and took from them what they were saying and tried to find a balance in the middle where we can ensure that there is a safe supply. We will never, ever allow our standards to be lessened. I think Canadian Blood Services, again, does a stand-up job, but I think they're open—even as they are the leaders in the industry in our country, they are even open to saying there may be other ways we need to look at doing business to ensure we have the supply to meet the demand that we're going to continue to see. At the end of the day, I think we need to do that. We will certainly be looking at that from our caucus's perspective, and we'll vote accordingly.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I think there's about 20 minutes left on the clock, and I'm going to turn the rest of my time over to my colleague Mr. Todd Smith from Prince Edward–Hastings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. I was waving at you but you were not—anyway, thank you for recognizing me.

It is my turn to say a few words on the record about Bill 21. As has been said by the previous two speakers, Bill 21 is a three-headed-affair kind of legislation. They have combined pieces of legislation that existed in the previous Parliament and have made it Bill 21, so the main part that everybody has been talking about has to do with the blood collection.

What Bill 21 would allow us to do is to put into law the number one recommendation of the Krever inquiry. That is many, many years later, but nevertheless, it will be put into law, and that is a ban on paid-for donation. Deputant after deputant who lived through the tainted blood scandal, who had loved ones affected or were themselves affected by receiving a blood transfusion or blood products that were infected with HIV actually came and made deputations. Sometimes it was their family members, because so many of them have passed from the disease they contracted from the tainted blood scandal. So this part, the first part of the bill—it is clear it will ban.

Of course, that was something that could have been done quite a bit of time ago. Canadian Plasma Resources, which is the business that had set up shop in Ontario, intended to collect plasma that could be sold on the international market to make those plasma-based medications and products that a lot of people use. They had already set up shop; three of them, actually, in Ontario. But we knew this since 2012. This is now December 2014. If there is ever a case of a government asleep at the switch, I would say that this is it, Speaker. Why is it that, two and a half years later, we come to this? I say this partly because, as much as I did not agree with Canadian Plasma Resources and what they had intentions to do, I don't believe that we should treat business that way.

I want to read a little bit from the record because Dr.—I will try really hard to pronounce the name properly—Barzin Bahadoust came. I'm sorry; I know this is not the right pronunciation of his name. He is the CEO of Canadian Plasma Resources and, although he knew that most of the people in the room were opposed to his business, he came and took the time to make a deputation, to talk to us and basically try to explain to us the message that we are sending to the business community.

I had the opportunity to question the CEO of Canadian Plasma Resources and I asked him—I'm reading from the record—"Can I ask how much have you invested in Ontario so far?" His answer, and here again, I quote from

the record: "We invested approximately \$8 million in the three plasma collection centres that we have right now, which two of them have gone through Health Canada audits. One has not, the one in Hamilton."

He had introduced the three locations. Two of them are right here in downtown Toronto. He went on to say, "We invested approximately \$40 million in industrial property for the future fractionation plant, which is now going to be used for development and we don't have" a need for that property anymore.

I went on to say, "What led you to believe that that was going to be a successful business? I mean, this is a lot of money." We're talking about \$48 million that the CEO of this company had invested right here in Ontario. This is money that had already been spent. I asked him, "Didn't you do your due diligence before spending that kind of money?"

He answered, "Well, we are using the same model that our competitors do in the United States." He talked about the company: "This company ... is the fifth-largest producer and supplier of plasma protein.... We believe that ... our model" would work.

I asked him, "So you did not see this coming ... that this bill was going to come forward and that your ability to have a successful business was going to be taken away...?" This is what he said. The CEO of Canadian Plasma Resources, on the record, said, "We met with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, with the chief of staff ... almost two years ago. We had told them at the time—and the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Employment....

"We had indicated to them" what they had the intention to do, and that "we will not be able to recruit donors without compensation—enough donors to make the business viable" without compensation.

So I asked him, "What was their response?" Here again, reading from the record: "They told us that this seems to be a good idea and they never contacted us back. We told them, if there were any concerns, to please get back to us."

So I pushed him and said, "Did they get back to you?"—which they didn't do—and he went on to say that, no, the government had never reached back to them.

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I do not, by any stretch of the imagination, want that business in Ontario; don't get me wrong. Canadian Plasma Resources was there to collect plasma, to change our system completely, to pay donors for their donations and then sell it on the open market. It was not going to help us. It was not going to help Ontarians. I did not want this business model to be there, but I did not want this business to be treated so badly, because that sent a chilling effect throughout all of the high-tech health care industry, that Ontario is not a good place to do business.

This is not a good message to send out, when a company invests that kind of money, when the company takes time to go and meet with the Ministry of Health and meet with the ministry of development, trade and all of this, and they are told: "That sounds like a good idea";

and the government, obviously, did not think it was a good idea because they support Bill 21, which basically means that the investment they have done is a complete loss. The renovations they have done on their site on Adelaide Street cost in the millions of dollars. Those are all for naught. The investment they've done in the training of their staff and setting up and going through the process with Health Canada to be accredited—this is all for naught.

Here again, it's not because I wanted them to succeed—far be it from me. But two years ago, in 2012, when they first came to Ontario, I raised the alarm bell. Anybody who follows health care knew; every week when my taxi would bring me from the airport back to Queen's Park I would go to Adelaide Street and look at the site being renovated and we would bring this forward: "How could this be? How could you allow this business to continue to invest when we are about to cut the grass right under their feet?" And for over two years, the government sat on its heels and did nothing, and now we have this.

We're not going to have paid plasma donation in Ontario and I'm really glad, but things could have turned out differently had the ministry acted two years ago, when this company first alerted the health care system that they were going to come and start doing business here.

Now, the Canadian Blood Services agency has the mandate to collect plasma in Ontario and throughout Canada, except for Quebec, which has Héma-Québec. They also came and did a deputation. Everybody wants to know—we are self-sufficient for the plasma products that we use directly. We are not self-sufficient when it comes to fragmented and manufactured medication that is made with plasma. We buy those on the open market. Some of it is made specifically with Ontario and Canadian plasma, sent overseas, manufactured and brought back; the rest of it we buy on the open market. So the question becomes: Why are we not self-sufficient?

The answer that came from Canadian Blood Services was a little bit puzzling and I certainly didn't see a strong business plan moving forward, saying, "We will. Here's how we will make sure that it will happen." We had some wishful thinking: "Trust us; it will come in the future" type of an answer. I was not really comfortable with that, as the member before me mentioned.

I used to be a plasma donor in Sudbury. I used to go every Wednesday at lunchtime. It was always the same group of people. Basically, it's the same office space where the blood was collected, but all of the plasma—we would be rushed to the side where all the big plasma collection machines were. They knew we were coming. We were there at lunch and within my lunch hour it was done and I was back at work.

But this closed, and they told us that they were moving to Thunder Bay. It was true. The plasma collection run by Canadian Blood Services moved to Thunder Bay. But this, too, has closed. Although I'm the health critic—I follow the health portfolio pretty closely—I

couldn't tell you where I could go to make a plasma donation. In northern Ontario, frankly, I don't think it exists anymore. Yet, I can tell you that there are lots of people like me who would be more than happy to donate. So there's a bit of a disconnect here.

We have a company who says that they can make a business of collecting plasma because it is needed on the open market, and then we have Canadian Blood Services, which receives most of its money from Ontario. Although we cannot tell Canadian Blood Services what to do, we can certainly have an adult conversation with them. Given that we're the ones who hold the millions of dollars that allow them to be there, I have a feeling they would listen to us. But no conversation is taking place. The Ministry of Health or the government has never written a letter or asked for a chat—sent a tweet, maybe; I'm not too picky. But it's not happening. Speaker; it's not happening.

Meanwhile, we have this Bill 21 happening and we have people who are worried about the products that we will buy on the open market that come partly from paid donors and wondering if we are using two different sets of ideology to deal with this thing. Let it be clear: The voluntary donation system in Canada is worth protecting. What we have is good, and the work that Canadian Blood Services does is good. But if it is true that we need more, if it is true that there are risks to our patients, to our families, then let's address this. Let's put a business plan in place, let's act upon it and let's change things. When was the last time you saw an ad in the paper that says, "We need more plasma donors"? Never. It has never happened. What's the disconnect? I don't get it.

The discussion we've had with Bill 21 certainly has exposed some of this: that the number of collection sites, the number of units collected—all of this seems to be part of a business model that collects less and less and less. Then, every now and again, we have people who pipe up and say, "Our supply is at risk because we don't collect enough." Well, we have a system in place to do the collection. If we don't collect enough, let's put a plan in place to change this. Given that Ontario is the biggest payer of the bunch, if we want to say something, let's make sure our voice is heard. None of that is happening.

Nevertheless, that part of Bill 21 will certainly go forward and the ban will be in place and this will be a conversation that will be closed and done with unless something happens in another Parliament where this bill is changed. But for now, Canadian Blood Services will have an exemption to pay for donations if the case is made for really rare blood types. I know that this already exists, in a small part—I think it's in Winnipeg, that has a small collection program for people with really rare blood types where they pay their donors. It's a very small program. So there's a little bit of an exemption for Canadian Blood Services, but for everybody else, for all that we're concerned, the number one recommendation from the Krever commission will finally be put into an act, into a bill, and the people of Ontario will continue to donate for altruism reasons.

There were 20 deputants who came and talked to us: people like Mike McCarthy, who used to be vice-president, I think, of the hemophilia association, who has also been infected by hep C. He talked about how important it is to make sure that we manage this resource so that it meets our needs and continues to be done on a voluntary basis.

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We had Andrew Cumming. He's also a hemophiliac and has been infected with HIV and hep C. Mr. Cumming never told anybody that he had been infected. He works in investment banking. He called himself a capitalist. It was quite interesting to see that he supports business—this is what he does for a living, making sure that private business succeeds and makes money and creates jobs and all the rest of it—but he was quite convincing when he said that he wants our plasma collection to continue to be on a voluntary basis.

Victoria Kinniburgh is the mother of two kids. Both of her kids have hemophilia. She wants our system to be safe, and she wants our system to be voluntary.

There were lots of other people who came and talked to us. Kat Lantaigne is a playwright, and has written *Tainted*. I know that they had a special showing of the play here at Queen's Park, and I had the opportunity to go and see it. I certainly encourage every MPP who has an opportunity, or anybody else who is listening and has the opportunity, to go and see the play. It really put things into perspective. It is well done, historically accurate and shows us the dangers of the past, to make sure we don't repeat them again.

The registered nurses' association came, Canadian Blood Services came, as I mentioned, the Canadian Immunodeficiencies Patient Organization also came, the Ontario Hospital Association came. We had a number of deputants that came for other parts of the bill—the Network of Rare Blood Disorder Organizations etc.

We had Mr. David Harvey, who also came. Mr. Harvey is a retired lawyer. He had the difficult task of representing the victims of tainted blood. He wants our blood system to be as safe as can be, and made it clear that what we had done with Bill 21 will never replace the four years and a hundred million pages that Justice Krever had done when he did his investigations, and really made the point that allowing paid-for plasma to be set up in Ontario was not going to help the Canadian market. It was not going to help the people in Ontario who need blood and plasma products—plasma, in this case—because it was clear that the plasma was going to be sold on the open market to the highest bidder; it was not going to be used for the people of Ontario.

People like Michael Decter also came. I think he is a well-known figure in health care; certainly somebody I respect immensely. He talked about: If we want self-sufficiency in plasma and plasma products, what are we waiting for before we put a plan in place? Certainly, to set up paid-for donation of plasma next to an at-risk population did not seem like the best way to treat that public resource and was not very respectful of the

principle that safety is paramount. This is what the voluntary system does. It puts safety first and paramount.

Some of the other comments have already been talked about, and I see that time is flying.

I'll go to the second part of the bill. The second part of the bill had to do with the regulation of pharmacies. For this, too, we had deputants who came and talked to us, one of them being the College of Pharmacists and their association.

This recommendation came from Dr. Thiessen. Dr. Thiessen is a very well-respected pharmacist who was asked to look at how to improve the system after the diluted chemo drug scandal, or affair, that we had in Ontario. One of his recommendations was to make sure that the pharmacies in hospitals would be overseen by the College of Pharmacists. Every other retail pharmacy in Ontario already has the oversight of the College of Pharmacists, but the pharmacies within our hospitals don't.

There were some good reasons why they were not included, one of the reasons being that they already have at least three levels of oversight that I can think of. They work within hospitals that receive accreditation, that have an accountability agreement. Everybody who works there belongs to the College of Pharmacists. So we already have many layers of oversight for our hospital pharmacies, but we will now add at least a fourth layer of oversight to those pharmacies with the College of Pharmacists.

I'm not opposed to this idea, by any stretch of the imagination. The fit is not as good as you would think, though, because most of the items already in place to do the oversight are meant for an environment where there is a money transaction.

When you go to the pharmacy, whether you have coverage or not, there's a money transaction that takes place. You will either present a card to show that you're insured, or you will take out your credit card or your cash to pay. A lot of what the accreditation does—not all of it, but a part of what the College of Pharmacists does when they go and inspect a pharmacy is they make sure that the public is protected in that money relationship.

Of course, when you translate this into a hospital setting, the hospital never sells their drugs. The hospital dispenses the drugs to the patients who are there. So this level of oversight is a bit like a square peg in a round hole: It doesn't work that well.

I wanted to make sure that there was enough time in there to allow the college to make the changes that are necessary but also for the hospitals to make the changes that are necessary, because some of it also has to do with space and location that applies to the retails and that will now have to be applied to hospitals.

I could think of a few hospitals where the pharmacy department is so jam-packed—12 feet high and every inch of space is used—that when they start to use some of the College of Pharmacists criteria, some of the hospital pharmacies may have to look at moving the pharmacy, expanding their pharmacy, changing the layout.

Everybody knows that renovation in a hospital is always expensive, never easy. There aren't too many of our hospitals that have extra room that they kept empty just in case the hospital pharmacy came knocking and needed extra room. So all of this had to happen.

I'm happy that one of the recommendations—that is, the one with the blood part of the bill—will come into effect as soon as we receive royal assent, but that part of the bill that has to do with oversight of pharmacies won't.

I had told you that the bill has three pieces. The third piece of the bill is where—how can I say it?—weird things happen.

You're talking about a bill that has been in the works for about two years. When the government reintroduced it, they copied what they had introduced the last time and pasted it into Bill 21.

But we had already started to talk about the previous bill. We had already pointed to some very weak pieces of legislation. I wouldn't call it sloppy work—but basically a little bit of a rush job to get it. Then they had the opportunity to fix all this but they didn't. They did the copy-and-paste of what we had before, so the same mistakes that were in the bills before were in the new version of the bill.

1650

That was a first for me, Speaker, and that was rather interesting—and I will go into a little bit more detail—where the government actually voted down entire sections of their own bill. We had taken the time to listen to the public, to front-line health care workers, to health organizations, and brought forward amendments to improve that bill. We had shown them in the previous Parliament that those were amendments that needed to be done. But they did not listen in the previous Parliament and, unfortunately, defeated most of our amendments in this Parliament.

The fact that the Liberals put out a bill and then voted against five entire sections of their own bill is—I think this is a first. If you did not like those sections in the first place, and we had already told you that they were problematic, why didn't you do your homework and put forward a bill that already had those corrections done?

So here we are with the government members on the committee voting down five sections of their own bill, and they gave no guarantees at committee that those provisions would come back as legislation. I quote the MPP from Ottawa South in committee, who said, "It would come back either as another piece of legislation or as regulation."

It is remarkable to see a government deleting its own legislation but refusing to accept good amendments from New Democrats that are supported by front-line health care workers, by people in the field and by Ontarians in general.

The amendment to change when the act came into effect passed but everything else was defeated. One of the main parts that we would have liked to see go through had to do with strengthening our pharmacy procurement program so that the problem we saw with the diluted

chemo drugs would never be allowed to happen again. Those are recommendations that were supported by all three parties through the work of the social policy committee. Unfortunately, the members of the Liberal government voted them down.

Those changes were nothing out of the ordinary. We were asking for more transparency when it comes to group purchasing organizations, when it comes to the business of giving rebates, when it comes to the business of being able to follow taxpayers' money as it moves from one provider to the next, knowing full well that the minute this money leaves the walls of the hospital we have no more oversight. If group purchasing organizations want to pay their CEO, like maybe match Dr. Mazza at \$1.4 million a year, they would be—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Nice.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, it's a nice gig if you can get it—they would be free to do this because there is no oversight of group purchasing organizations. Well, it got voted down. The same thing with the salary disclosures; the same thing with giving the Auditor General the right to oversee them; the same thing with giving the Legislative Assembly the right to call them in front of committee. They voted all of that down.

Then, the third part of the bill has to do with changes to regulated health professionals. This is where we saw where most of the sections of the bill that had to do with this, the government voted against their own sections and defeated them.

What we were left with was pretty thin and certainly would not allow us to respond to what Ontarians are telling us. They want more transparency; they want to know the results. Why aren't we sharing infection results when a college finds out? Why aren't we sharing what a member is doing? None of this is there.

Unfortunately, I see that the time on the clock is running out. Those are the comments I was able to put onto the record. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to allow me to deliver my inaugural address during debate on this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member is seeking unanimous consent for her inaugural speech. Agreed? Agreed.

The member from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to lead off third reading debate of Bill 21, our government's proposed Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act, 2014, which was introduced on July 22, 2014.

This legislation, if passed, would combine our government's actions to prohibit compensation to blood and plasma donors with the regulation of hospital pharmacies and other actions to strengthen oversight and improve patient safety. I'll start with the regulation of hospital pharmacies and then move on to blood donation.

This part of the bill, if passed, would amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act so that the Ontario

College of Pharmacists can inspect and license all hospital pharmacies operating in Ontario. Additionally, amendments would be made to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, and the Public Hospitals Act, to enhance the sharing of information among health system partners and strengthen the oversight of health care practitioners.

The second part of the bill relates to our government's actions to prohibit compensation to blood and plasma donors in Ontario.

Every year, thousands of Ontarians voluntarily give blood and plasma to help others survive accidents, surgery or life-threatening conditions. This is a system that has been managed by Canadian Blood Services, a public, not-for-profit organization, for more than 15 years.

Our government is taking steps to protect the integrity of our national public blood donation system. As a first step, we amended two existing regulations under the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act to strengthen licensing requirements and prohibit payment to donors for their blood or plasma.

As a second step, this legislation includes a revised version of the previously introduced Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014, which, if enacted, would clearly and unequivocally prohibit paying people for blood and plasma donations.

It's important to note that Canadian Blood Services and its donors would be exempt from these prohibitions, so that CBS is not prevented from paying donors in Ontario if it deems such a measure to be necessary. Moreover, researchers would be exempt from the prohibition against paying for blood donations when it is being used exclusively for research purposes.

The proposed legislation would also strengthen our regulatory enforcement tools so that we can take swift and decisive action in case of violations. This is very important.

Let me be clear: This decision to prohibit payment for blood or plasma donations will in no way reduce the supply or availability of blood or blood products for Ontarians, but it will protect the integrity of our current blood donation system, a system that works. I'm very proud of our voluntary life-saving blood donation system, and I am also proud of the quality care that health professionals in Ontario provide to patients every day. I encourage all Ontarians to donate blood if they are able to do so.

I have full confidence in Canada's national blood system, and I know that Canadian Blood Services has the ability to successfully manage the blood and blood products supply for Ontarians.

I'd like to thank our valued partners for their support on all parts of this legislation. Speaker, I am confident that all members can support this proposed legislation. Thank you.

1700

Mr. Speaker, it is now an honour for me to give my inaugural speech in this Legislature. It's a privilege to

join all the MPPs before me who have stood up in this great House to give their addresses.

I want to do three things in this speech, Mr. Speaker. I want to tell you about my path to get here, to show what has prepared me to serve the people of Ontario in Kathleen Wynne's government. I believe we are entering a new period of openness, prosperity and equality in Ontario, and I am proud to be a part of it. I want to outline my service goals for Ontario and for my riding of Halton. This is the best province in the best country in the world. And if I may say, Halton is the best riding in the best province in the best country in the world. Finally, I would also like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the many people who have helped me arrive at this point in my life.

I truly believe that who we are and where we come from is the force that drives us forward. We are our history, and history must shape the future. Let me tell you about my history and my path. It is a path that has given me the tools and courage to meet the challenges of public life and turn them into opportunities for everyone. It is a path that has given me great respect for the value of education, and it is a path that has instilled in me the belief in public service and the dedication, the strong work ethic and the understanding I need to serve the people in my riding of Halton and in Ontario.

My path has taught me about opportunity, education and service. You see, I was born in Durban, South Africa, under apartheid. To me, as a child, that meant going to a restaurant and being asked to leave because of the colour of my skin; it meant going to a fair, and not being able to ride on a Ferris wheel because of the colour of my skin; and it meant going to a park and not being able to sit on a bench or swim in the ocean because of the colour of my skin. These are small things, in a way—the small daily oppressions of a vicious system. But they add up to something very big: the attempt to define someone as inferior, subordinate and unworthy. I know what it feels like to be oppressed, belittled and ashamed. I know what it feels like to want a voice, but to be denied and unheard.

These are the real-life lessons I had to learn at a young age. It's a feeling that children nowhere should have to endure. Living under apartheid taught me that justice, democracy and opportunity are worth fighting for. It also taught me that governments should work for people, not against them. That is why opportunity for all is an important part of what I want to accomplish for Ontario and for Halton.

As a young girl, I immigrated with my family to a small town in Alberta, Canada. My parents chose Canada. They saw the opportunity for a new and better life in Canada, where human rights are protected, where democracy is valued and where we could pursue our dreams. Both of my parents were educators. My father was a teacher, then a high school principal and finally a superintendent of schools. My mother taught for more than 40 years. In fact, she was eventually voted one of the 100 most memorable teachers in the 100-year history of the Alberta Teachers' Association.

An important part of the dream my parents pursued in Canada was the education of young people, giving them the tools and helping shape their values to build a future for themselves and their community. That is why I believe a quality education is one of the most important gifts we can give our children. It is one of the only things we can give our kids that can't be taken away. It will pull them up, regardless of their situation.

With my belief in education and my democratic concerns, I studied political science at the University of Lethbridge, earning a bachelor of arts. I followed that with graduate work in political science at the University of Alberta and Queen's University. I also met and married my husband at university, and we moved briefly to the US where I began my career in broadcast journalism—with a sense of mission, I might add.

I believe truth, facts and a well-informed public is the best guarantor we have of a strong democracy.

My first positions were at NBC and PBS stations in Albany, New York. When we moved back to Ontario, I joined CBC Ottawa as a reporter, eventually becoming an anchor for national newscasts at CBC Newsworld, Newsworld International and National Radio news.

I also hosted and produced a show on environmental issues, an education show at TVO, as well as anchoring and producing a nightly newscast at OMNI Television where I met my friends MPP Laura Albanese and Associate Minister Dipika Damerla. I also wound up anchoring at CTV Newsnet as a national news anchor.

I interviewed Prime Ministers, Premiers, world leaders, actors, musicians, the head sommelier at the Trianon Palace—even suspected terrorists and a real pirate. I got to talk to people when they were experiencing some of the most challenging times of their life—as bombs dropped, as they climbed Mount Everest and as they mourned the loss of loved ones, princesses, Popes and innocence. I learned first-hand about some of the serious challenges people face on a daily basis in the world and in our province.

I have always believed in the importance of public service, and my career as a journalist eventually showed me that reporting was not enough for me. I learned about the problems, but I wanted to help.

That is the path that brought me here, Mr. Speaker, a path that has deeply instilled in me the values of opportunity, education and service. It is also a path that has wound through my community, my riding, my Halton, for more than 20 years now. It is our home. Our children were born there. We have raised them there. We have been actively involved in this vibrant, growing community. One of our first engagements in public life was helping to fight against the closure of a local school. We were successful.

That is why I am thrilled to be here today, representing Halton as the elected member of provincial Parliament. Halton is my home, and as Halton's new voice at Queen's Park, I've been busy.

Soon after the 41st Parliament of Ontario began sitting, I was named the parliamentary assistant to the

Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It is a great honour and privilege to work with Dr. Hoskins on such an important portfolio.

I'm especially pleased to be working on the province's first-ever strategy for dementia and Alzheimer's.

Applause.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you. I'm proud of that.

I know the devastation these conditions can have on individuals and families. My own family suffered through it with my father-in-law for years.

As Halton's voice at Queen's Park, I will work hard on implementing my vision for our community. It's a vision borne out of the personal and professional experiences I've gained throughout my life, but it also comes from my years of visiting local shops, meeting neighbours on the street and watching our young people grow and flourish as they prepare to become tomorrow's leaders.

I want to help create a place in which local leaders at all levels work together to make Halton a place where residents have the pride and comfort of knowing they live in a place where the opportunities for success are without limit.

To do that, we need to make sure that jobs and the economy remain a top priority. I want to re-establish a strong working relationship between the Ontario government and our local business community.

Now, I also know many of my constituents have serious concerns about transportation. Insufficient transit systems not only make it harder for us to get to our places of work, but they take away from the time we could be spending and enjoying our families. That's why we need to keep investing in roads and bridges to make sure they're safe and able to handle the rigours of daily traffic. And we need public transit to be affordable, convenient and reliable.

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I also want to expand local health care services so that we can continue to provide the people of Halton with top-tier health care, and I want to make sure we're investing in our children and giving them the best education we possibly can.

I told you how I came from a family of educators, Mr. Speaker. You have heard about my parents. This tradition has continued. My husband is a professor at a local university, and I have taught at a regional college myself. Even our teenage daughter teaches dance to little ones.

Coming from this tradition of education, I want to make sure that we continue to support the world-class education system in this province and in Halton so that our schools continue to turn out bright, innovative and skilled graduates.

These are just some of the things I want my public service to focus on over the next four years. These are the things that I am passionate about. These are my values. They come from my history, my path from South Africa and oppression to Canada and freedom, to Ontario and opportunity, to Halton and community and now to here, with all of you, at Queen's Park.

But, of course, Mr. Speaker, I did not travel this path on my own. None of us can make it this far without the love and support and belief of others. So now, if you will indulge me, I would like to take my final moments to give my thanks to those who have been with me on this journey.

To my parents, Pixie and Larry, and my parents by marriage, Dorothea and her late husband, Tommy, and my late stepdad, Barrie, thank you for your love and for believing in me. We are nothing without our parents.

To my Liberal family, former MPP Walt Elliot and his wife, Anne, who helped me from the beginning, and to our amazing PLA: Gerry, Yvonne, Ken, Gillian, Dr. Ric, Beth, Martyn, Allison, George, Rob, Veronica, Bob, Brian, Alex and too many more to mention—thank you for your tireless efforts and hard work.

To my fantastic campaign team—Jason, Mora, Mike, Brian and Jonathan: you walked miles with me. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

A big thank you also to Pat Sorbara, David Hurley, Carol Price and, of course, our amazing Premier, Kathleen Wynne.

To my friends Marianne, Lynda, Shelley and Paula and my neighbours Jack and Joan, who is now gone; Carol and Bill, who is also now gone; Urs, Tess, Jen, Chris, Sonia and Dave—many people who have been with me for a long time—thank you for the laughs and thank you for being there. You are all amazing and wonderful people.

Finally to local supporters: the Honourable Betty Kennedy; Jack Manchisi, who has now passed away; John and Kelly Ayres; Darryn; Abbas; the Rizvees; Jennifer Stebbings; Jeff Raulino; Zeeshan; Parveen; Katie and Sam—thank you for all your support and hard work.

To the tireless, selfless volunteers who knocked on doors, made countless phone calls, organized rallies, put up lawn signs and helped me to fill the riding with a positive energy: Thank you.

Finally, to my family: Randy, my husband; my son, Galen; and our daughter, Oriana. I know I would not be standing here today were it not for your endless love and support and belief in me. So thank you.

I'd like to leave you now with a tweet that I recently found my daughter had sent out about me this week. She said, "I'm proud of my mother every single day for going from not being able to vote because of the colour of her skin To being voted for, and winning."

So thank you to all of you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for allowing me to address this Legislature. I am forever grateful, and I am pleased to be the voice for Halton.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Halton. One of the nice things about inaugural speeches: There's a song in there. It's called Getting to Know You.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Oh, we already know him.

Mr. Todd Smith: You know too much already, right?

Interjection: Maiden speech.

Mr. Todd Smith: I've done my maiden speech already. I'll tell you what: As impressive as my maiden speech was, back in 2011, that was pretty darned impressive, I must say, so congratulations to the member for Halton—a very lovely presentation, obviously emotional and heartfelt. Congratulations to her and her family for everything they've accomplished.

Before I say too much more about that, I think we should also maybe point out the contributions that the previous member for Halton made in this Legislature—a very good friend of all of us here on this side of the House, Ted Chudleigh, who spent 20 years here at the Legislature. I now occupy his office up in 416—a lovely office. Thanks very much for leaving it to me, Ted, but thanks so much for everything that you did for the people of the Halton region and for the people of Ontario during your tenure here at Queen's Park as well, as a member of provincial Parliament.

I must say to the new member, as emotional as that maiden speech was—and it was very emotional—congratulations on the long distance that she has come. Being that girl who wasn't allowed on the Ferris wheel—I mean, there aren't very many of us in this room who can relate to what that must have been like for her in South Africa, to not be able to get on that Ferris wheel because of the colour of her skin, to now being an elected official here in this great country and in this great province that we call Ontario. Congratulations again.

Now, with all of those niceties out of the way—the new member has a lot of work on her plate, as she alluded to, because this province—in spite of the fact that we are a very fair place to live, and a democratic society, we have our problems here in Ontario. They were outlined in great detail today by the Auditor General.

She is the parliamentary assistant for health, and there were a lot of issues that were on the plate for the Auditor General today. Bonnie Lysyk, I thought, did a wonderful job of exploring and emphasizing the shortcomings of this government and this Premier and especially this cabinet.

I know that the new member from Halton is not in cabinet, but she has a very strong voice. You can sense that. She's a broadcaster. She knows how to deal with facts and figures, and she knows that the state that this province is in right now is not an enviable one for members of that cabinet. They're the ones who put us in this position, Mr. Speaker, and it's going to take people in those back rows and surrounding that cabinet to talk some sense into these people, to help us get out of the hole that we're in in Ontario. It was an unbelievable Auditor General's report today, and you're going to be hearing a lot more about it in the days to come.

But let me, first of all, deal with this bill. I'm sure I'll probably go back into the AG's report on a couple of items here in my next 17 minutes, as we talk about the Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act.

I've got to be honest: The title of this bill is excellent—the Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act—

but from what we saw today, I wouldn't trust this Premier or this cabinet to walk my dog, let alone protect my health care. They have made such a mess of our health care system.

There are members over there—there's one there in rural Ontario, and I know he knows the dire situation that we are in in the Quinte region when it comes to health care in rural Ontario. They're having to cut \$12 million more from Quinte Health Care. They walked nine people out the door last week. Nine people were walked out the door last week by officials there. Another 30 more are promised to lose their jobs in the coming weeks—Merry Christmas from the province of Ontario, from this Liberal government and from Quinte Health Care. Another 30 more are going to be walked out the door. That's just the first piece of the pie. They have to find another \$12 million at Quinte Health Care—hospitals in Belleville, Trenton, Bancroft and Prince Edward county.

I don't think this government has what it takes. We've had so many scandals when it comes to health care. We had the Ornge scandal. We had the eHealth scandal. We find out today in the Auditor General's report that there's no plan for palliative care, in spite of the fact that study after study shows that investing in our hospices is good value for money. That was the whole focus of the Auditor General's report today—value for money—and we didn't find a whole lot of good examples of that in the AG's report.

1720

Let me talk about the bill for a second. The bill doesn't deal with any of the problems that we're facing in Ontario right now. The substance of this bill deals with voluntary blood donations and measures to safeguard the pharmacy system in this country against chemotherapy dosage problems like the one we experienced in this province almost two years ago. Both of those are things that it's hard to argue against. Since I'm supporting the bill, I'll be making my argument in favour of the bill, but not in favour of the cabinet and the Premier—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Oh, I thought he would.

Mr. Todd Smith: All sympathies to the minister without portfolio, possibly the next president of the Toronto Blue Jays.

Health care is a core Canadian value, and keeping it public, accessible and cost-effective are all things that should be above the usual partisan rancour that we hear from time to time in this House, and maybe you just heard some, although the Auditor General's report backs up what I've been saying. And she is not partisan; she's an officer of this Legislature.

While we're on it, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk, with her report today, talked about overspending in our electricity sector, and there is a connection to the shortcomings that we're seeing in our health care right now.

The smart meter plan that was rolled out by Dalton McGuinty and this Liberal government has proven to be anything but a smart decision. There was no value-for-money audit that was done on this, except for the one we

found today that showed, once again, that the government is \$1 billion over budget on its smart meter program, which hasn't reduced consumption of electricity—

Ms. Soo Wong: Point of order: The member is not debating Bill 21; he's talking about the Auditor General's report that was presented this afternoon. I believe we're debating third reading of Bill 21, the Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act. Can you just remind the member opposite to stay focused on Bill 21? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member for bringing that to my attention. I have been listening intently and am seeing correlation to the bill, so I will continue back to the member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

What I was going to say was that money being wasted in the electricity sector could be better spent in our health care system. If we weren't making poor decisions in our energy sector—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm glad you said "we."

Mr. Todd Smith: Not me. If they weren't making poor decisions in the energy sector—somebody has a keen ear over there. If they, the Liberal government, weren't making so many mistakes in their energy sector, then maybe we would be able to afford proper health care services. I know that the member who just stood up on the point of order cares deeply about health care, because she is a nurse, and she is another one of those people that we're counting on having the ear of the cabinet and the Premier to make sure that our health care is being safeguarded, as in the title of this bill. I will go back to the bill.

We currently collect enough plasma for transfusion in this province. We purchase almost 70% of our plasma protein products from the United States, both paid and unpaid donors, so what we're doing isn't keeping material acquired from paid donors from getting into the system; we're just keeping it from being sold in Ontario. The reason for doing this isn't as hypocritical as it actually sounds; we have a belief in this country in this universal medicare system that we have: the belief that an Ontarian, regardless of their economic circumstances, is entitled to access to health care without the risk that the cost could bankrupt themselves or their loved ones. Health care is not an entitlement; it's a public trust here in Ontario. It's an investment that this province makes in ensuring that equality of opportunity is provided to all. That's why it's important that we ensure that donations of blood in this province are strictly voluntary.

However, we have to ensure that we're meeting demand here in Ontario so that we're importing fewer plasma products from the United States. My colleague the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Mr. Miller, spoke eloquently about this a couple of days ago, about the need for plasma products when this bill was before the House. Currently these plasma products are being used as treatments for Alzheimer's disease and other illnesses where we're likely to see an increase in demand as the population in Ontario ages.

This is very near and dear to my heart, as the member for Prince Edward–Hastings. As you'll know from the many times I've stood up in this Legislature, we have one of the oldest populations in the province in my riding of Prince Edward–Hastings, specifically in Prince Edward county.

We have a real issue in Prince Edward county right now. We have a hospital that is continuously having services reduced. I have a little bit of a timeline here and I would just like to share a little bit of this, if I could, from the Times; it's a newspaper in Wellington, in Prince Edward county. In 2005, that hospital that was built by the community a long time ago had 24 medical beds. At the time, in 2005, the president and CEO of Quinte Health Care said this: "There are no more rabbits left to pull out of the hat. We've taken" \$13 million "out of operations over the last four years." Again, this was in 2005; that's almost 10 years ago. Now they're going back again and they have to take another \$12 million out of the system this year.

That hospital that had—let me make sure I get this right—24 beds is now down to 12 beds, 10 medical beds on certain days. The people of Prince Edward county are very worried about the future of their hospital there and the ability of this government to safeguard their precious Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital, because they've seen the waste. They've seen the scandal. They've seen the misappropriation of funds.

Today in the Auditor General's report, a million flu vaccinations are unaccounted for. The Ministry of Health doesn't know where a million flu vaccinations have gone, yet we're going to continue to trust these guys to fix the situation that we're in right now? They can't do it. Nobody knows where those flu vaccinations are. It's unacceptable, the lack of oversight that's occurring.

Prince Edward county is unique. Rural Ontario is unique. I know there are members over there who understand that, but I think there are a lot of members who maybe don't understand that over there. We can walk out the front doors here at Queen's Park in this beautiful building, on the front grounds—I think the tow trucks are gone now so you would actually be able to walk down University Avenue. You can walk down the street, 500 metres from here, and you can walk into the lobbies of some of the best hospitals in Canada. You can walk down and you have a choice of four or five different world-class hospitals right here in downtown Toronto.

But people in Prince Edward county—and that's just one small part of my riding; keep in mind, my riding is huge; it's the size of Prince Edward Island. In Prince Edward county, which is the same geographic size as Toronto, there's one little hospital, and a number of beds are continuously being removed from that hospital. The services are continuously being removed from that hospital, so you can understand why people in rural Ontario are scared.

A lot of those people who now live in Prince Edward county used to live here in Toronto where they had access to those world-class hospitals within a stone's

throw of their condo or their home that they sold for \$2 million. Now they're in Prince Edward county, and the reason that they went there is because there's a very viable hospital there, but the services are continuously being ripped out of that hospital. You can understand their concern in Prince Edward county and also at the north end of my riding in Bancroft too, with the North Hastings Hospital that's there.

We have a lot of people who used to live in the GTA who spend six months of the year during the cottage season up in Bancroft in North Hastings. They question the ability of this government to manage properly, and they certainly don't trust what's been happening in this sector for the last several years with the creation of the local health integration networks, the LHINs.

1730

Money is being poured from the Ministry of Health into this new bureaucracy that continues to grow, and they're not seeing the money make it to the front-line services at North Hastings Hospital or Prince Edward County Memorial Hospital or Trenton Memorial Hospital or Belleville General Hospital. Those rural hospitals are continuously having their services cut back, and they're seeing more and more money leaving this building, leaving the Ministry of Health and filling up LHIN offices, that layer of bureaucracy in the middle, and not preserving our health care.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You're wrong.

Mr. Todd Smith: I can't believe the member from Northumberland–Quinte West is saying I'm wrong. I am not wrong. I can't wait to talk to the Trentonian about that statement.

We continuously let standards lapse so that we can let bureaucracy grow, and bureaucracy has grown. That LHIN office in the South East LHIN started with 25 people; there are now close to 60 people working at that LHIN office. It's unacceptable.

Buildings that were constructed to house in-patient beds at Belleville General Hospital are now filled with administration; they're not filled—

Interjection.

Mr. Todd Smith: I certainly have. I talk to my LHIN people all the time. You should try it sometime.

Let me move on to another story. We are talking about pharmacies here. One of the parts of the bill has to do with pharmacies. What we should be doing is providing our pharmacies with a greater role in our health care system.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Can you name a pharmacist?

Mr. Todd Smith: I actually can name a pharmacist. I was talking with Monette McFaul not that long ago. Monette McFaul works at the Metro pharmacy in Belleville, and I had the opportunity to spend an hour or so with Monette and just watch as she was providing health care services at the grocery store there. People were coming in, they were getting the flu shots—those were the flu shots that actually made it to their destination, not the million that went missing that the Ministry of Health has no idea where they are. I know the truth

really does hurt sometimes, but we've got a lot of mistakes that are being made by this government, and they just don't want to own up.

These pharmacists are providing a valuable service and they're relieving some of the strain on our health care system, relieving some of the strain on our emergency rooms and our doctors as well. They are providing the flu vaccination shots, they're providing some counselling services—in the case of a lot of seniors who are juggling 10 or 15 different medications, there are some counselling services that are now being provided at the pharmacies—but there is a lot more opportunity that could be given to them to work to their full scope of practice. They're extremely well-trained people. They spend a lot of time in school, and they are a great asset to our health care system. I had the opportunity back in October to spend an hour with them, and they are providing a great service.

Everybody knows that a small percentage of the people who are visiting our hospitals and emergency rooms are accounting for the large portion of hospital expenses. But when we're talking about medication, we're talking about patients who suffer from some of the worst illnesses that we struggle with as families, as a province or even among the survivors right here in this very House. We cannot provide too much oversight. The Ministry of Health has, at several points, failed with its procurement processes, and this should become part of a larger discussion that we'll have to have regarding how we can better provide health care services for Ontarians.

We heard several months ago about helicopters that were procured by the ministry that were too small for paramedics to perform CPR in. That was part of the Ornge scandal. We owe it to patients to ensure, at every step along the way, that we're providing them with the medication they need, that their safety has been ensured to the best of our ability and that our experts, namely, the pharmacists who are often charged with administering and dispensing these medications, are able to apply their extensive knowledge to the process as often as possible.

We have a few medical officers here in this House, but few of us are able to comment with any expert knowledge both on what directly transpired and the tools that will be required by pharmacists, technicians and other professionals along the line who have to deal directly with patients.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's like a song to my ears, Mr. Speaker. I always enjoy you referring to my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin.

I want to start off by commending the member from Halton on her inaugural speech. I remember it wasn't that long ago that I found myself talking about my family, particularly my biggest fan, which was my mother, and I found it very difficult in delivering that. But it's nice to

see that some of her colleagues were here, and some of my colleagues were here, supporting her through this. You are going to be a really big shining star coming through this.

I also wanted to comment on my friend across the way, the member from Prince Edward-Hastings. He has a knack of drying eyes really quickly when he addresses individuals in this House, and he always has that art of getting fingers pointed at him. You would think that he is a target, but he is an individual who is passionate in regard to what he believes in. He always comes in, brings his A game and speaks to the issues, particularly for the people that he represents in his constituency.

Again, to the member from Halton—a very heartfelt speech. You will certainly bring, and I hope that you will bring, a new level of decorum in this House, and I look towards you on many occasions. You are a very elegant speaker, and I look forward to being in this House on many occasions to be part of your discussion. Again, I will always offer that heartfelt handshake. I look forward to working with her, going forward.

I think some of the views that she brought in her comments are, why do we get involved? Why do we choose to become politically active or pursue an avenue? That's because we believe in changing individuals' lives, and that's what we want to do.

Today, we are talking about Bill 21, the Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act. I want to take my time to highlight a wonderful, talented person that I met through this process. I had the opportunity of actually having a chat with her and meeting up with her. She is a very extraordinary person, and she did quite a bit of work on protecting the blood system in Canada by actually working on developing a film.

Her name is Kat Lanteigne. She is an actor, writer and producer. She completed her classical training at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School. Kat's play, *Tainted*—something that the member from Nickel Belt highlighted in her statement earlier; I would encourage everybody, if you haven't seen it, to go out and see it—premiered in Toronto last autumn to critical acclaim. Kat was named one of the people who made Toronto a better place by the *Grid* magazine in 2013 for her play, *Tainted*.

I have met Kat here at Queen's Park when she spent countless hours lobbying members of the importance of the blood system, as well as reminding us of the dangers of past mistakes and not following that path again. She brought her play, *Tainted*, here to Queen's Park for members and staff of Queen's Park, and later, she brought it to Parliament Hill.

Until the late 1990s, people gave no thought to the blood system in our country. Kat recalls walking into her living room in Abbotsford, BC, and seeing her mother sitting in front of the TV, crying, after watching the news report about tainted blood victims. At that moment, something was seeded that took Lanteigne 20 years to put forth as a play about the tainted blood scandal.

Kat has said she "really wanted to find the common experience of Canadian families across the country, so I

could have a fair representation of what people lived in their living rooms.”

She really wanted it to be authentic and to have the depth it needed to resonate with people.

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She based the play on interviews she did with individuals and families across the country. She found nearly half of her \$110,000 budget through crowdfunding. Aside from one high school effort, however, Lanteigne had written only one stage play in the mid-1990s for a small theatre in Vancouver. She shopped her blood-scandal idea to every independent theatre company in Toronto, and all of them turned her down.

Kat was ashamed at how the government treated people involved in this scandal, and became determined to not let something as important as the Canadian blood system become jeopardized again.

She also wanted to ensure that Canadians didn't forget this unfortunate part of our history. Through her play, and through her one-on-one meetings with legislators across this country, she is not only retelling the story, but she is holding Legislatures to account for policies being implemented and how they can and will change our health care system, for better or worse.

I just wanted to take this opportunity during the debate of Bill 21 to highlight Kat Lanteigne for her outstanding dedication, determination and fighting for the protection of our blood system, as well as her creativity with Tainted and sharing those stories with us and letting us not forget an important part of our history.

I think this is one remarkable individual. There are many other remarkable individuals, but this is something that we certainly need to learn from, Mr. Speaker. This is an opportunity for people just to sit down for a couple of hours with a loved one and experience it for yourself from your own living room.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Han Dong: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to allow me to deliver my inaugural address during the debate on this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Trinity-Spadina has requested unanimous consent for him to deliver his inaugural speech. Is that the wish of the House? Carried.

Back to the member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you.

Applause.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, kind members of this Legislature, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to begin by congratulating my fellow Torontonians on yet another successful election. I want to thank the electors in my home riding of Trinity-Spadina. You have endured three elections in less than five months. Thank you for exercising your democratic rights. It's truly an honour to be entrusted by you to serve in this great Legislature.

To our newly elected mayor, Mr. John Tory, congratulations on a successful campaign. You earned it.

To Toronto city council, in particular my counterparts at city hall—Mr. Joe Cressy, Mr. Mike Layton and the local school board trustees, Ausma Malik and Jo-Ann Davis: I look forward to working with you on the issues that are most important to our community. I look forward to working with them alongside our good federal member, Adam Vaughan, who was elected recently during the summer.

Finally to the newly elected mayors: Her Worship Bonnie Crombie, mayor of Mississauga—actually, her son used to be president of the U of T Liberals, and we worked closely during that by-election.

To our very own former minister Linda Jeffrey, mayor of Brampton: Congratulations.

As a new member, I have yet to master the art of debating and public speaking, unlike the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke or my good friend from Toronto Centre, Mr. Murray. I have much to learn, but I would like to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about myself and what I want to achieve as the representative of my beloved community in this provincial Legislature.

A few days ago, my colleague the member from Brampton-Springdale, Ms. Harinder Malhi, delivered a moving maiden speech in which she mentioned that she's the youngest member of this Legislature. I will also attempt to put on record that I could be the newest Canadian serving this Legislature, I think.

I'm humbled to stand here today in this Legislature on behalf of the people of Trinity-Spadina, entrusted by them with the responsibility to speak up for the community. I think many members, as they sit during these sessions and stay in Toronto, will find the people of Trinity-Spadina are like their neighbours. But I stand here more humbled as the first Liberal elected since 1990 from that riding, and 1990 is a very special year to me personally, and you'll see why.

I want to thank Mr. Rosario Marchese, my predecessor, for his dedication in representing the people of Trinity-Spadina.

Some 24 years earlier, another Chinese Canadian, Mr. Bob Wong, stood proudly as the provincial representative of what was then called the riding of Fort York—he, by the way, was the first Chinese Canadian cabinet minister in Canadian history. That member, during his last few months in office, acted in what would later become a bit of a karmic final act prior to his unfortunate defeat by Mr. Marchese—although my colleagues across the floor will probably think otherwise—the act that changed the fate of a local newcomer to Ontario, a man I call Dad.

My father first arrived at the beautiful eastern coast of St. John's, Newfoundland, as an international student. Soon, he decided to forgo his previous career in film to pursue a better life for his daughter Difei and his son Han. My father knew Canada was going to be our new beginning, but he was struggling to get his family here. He approached Mr. Wong, the empathetic and compassionate individual that he is, and Mr. Wong took it upon himself to go the extra mile. He inquired about my

father's immigration file and helped my dad to settle in the welcoming community which his son now has the honour to represent. With Bob's help, my father obtained his landed status, and on September 23, 1990, my family was reunited. I still remember my father was working two jobs at the time, and he was three hours late picking us up that night.

That year, I was 13, and oddly—or my mentor would say that that's not odd—I was fluent in Mandarin and the Shanghai dialect but I couldn't speak a complete sentence in English. Like a newborn baby, I was mesmerized by the night view of Toronto coming off the Gardiner Expressway. Who would have thought at the time of the odds that that young boy would one day have the great privilege of representing the residents in that beautiful skyline—only in Toronto, only in Ontario, only in Canada.

Once my family settled in Toronto, the sense of home and the community was overwhelming. Our neighbours, in the lead-up to the Thanksgiving weekend, approached us with gifts and essentials. I still recall our reaction then, as we didn't know what was going on. We couldn't understand. My sister actually had to look up the word "Thanksgiving" in a dictionary. Words cannot express the joy and the sense of belonging we felt at the time that that small act of a few had on us.

I also cannot express how much I cherish this opportunity right here, right now, to learn what I've learned, to see what I've seen, to listen to what I've heard and, most importantly, to have the opportunity to say what I have to say on behalf of the constituents of the great riding of Trinity–Spadina. That 13-year-old boy stands here today as a husband, a father, a privileged member of this assembly, thanks to the great constituency work done by former member Bob Wong. That assured me that small acts by elected officials could have a lasting impact on one's life and on one family's fortune as well.

In 2003, I was given a very fortunate opportunity to work in the constituency office of the honourable Maria Minna, former federal member for Beaches–East York, helping individuals, many like my father when he went to Mr. Wong's office. Those experiences, complemented by two others, have been most beneficial as I interact with young people in my role as an MPP and as a parliamentary assistant to the Honourable Dr. Reza Moridi, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

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First, working as the marketing director for a seafood processing company, I was tasked to identify and develop new international opportunities and markets, proudly promoting made-in-Canada food products.

Today I'm so excited to see that our province is moving in the right direction. Premier Kathleen Wynne's vision of an open Ontario has never been more crucial, and I'm very lucky to be part of her team.

While working abroad, and in the private sector, I witnessed the growth of emerging economies and the lack of opportunities offered to our new grads. So I decided to put together an international internship program

with the help of Industry Canada and the Canada Shanghai Business Association. We successfully provided job opportunities to 15 interns for six months, where they would be trained domestically for three months and abroad for three. Out of the 15, 12 obtained permanent employment or started up their own company, so in our minds, that was a very successful program.

I look forward to bringing that experience to my role as a parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Those experiences, combined, made me understand the importance of economic development and the crucial impact that even a small effort can have on young people's lives when we lend a hand to support their career growth.

Those experiences, dating as far back as 24 years ago, helped in shaping my political perspective and are what drove me to run for public office, helping the good people of a great riding that I call home.

Trinity–Spadina is a unique riding. I'm so honoured to represent a riding that has so many of Toronto's best-known landmarks: the CN Tower; the Rogers Centre, formerly known as SkyDome; the Air Canada Centre, where our Raptors are—

Interjection.

Mr. Han Dong: I was going to use another word, but—

Mr. Mike Colle: They won last night.

Mr. Han Dong: Yes, that's right. They're currently having the best season in their history.

The CBC centre, the Toronto Eaton Centre, Roy Thomson Hall, Four Seasons, the Metro Toronto Convention Centre—where I believe Her Majesty's third party recently had their convention—and city hall, where a former member of this House will soon be installed as mayor.

It's home to Ontario Place, which once again will become one of the province's top tourism and leisure facilities. I, like many of my constituents, was very excited to hear that our government is pledging a multi-million dollar investment to revitalize Ontario Place, turning it into a modernized, all-season facility that will create wonderful memories for families from across the province. I'm excited to work with the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on that initiative.

My riding is one of the most diverse in the province. Almost 37% of the residents of my riding speak a language other than English or French, according to census data. Whether it's Little Portugal on Dundas, Little Italy on College, Chinatown on Spadina, Koreatown on Bloor or Kensington Market, they are mosaics of so many different cultures and ethnicities.

If any of the out-of-town members wants to go and find a good restaurant, I have good tips. I'll tell you where the best dumplings are and where the best bulgogi is. We've got a great Mexican restaurant on Baldwin—

Mr. Chris Ballard: He's taking us for dinner.

Mr. Han Dong: Yes, that's right.

I'm fortunate that my riding also houses Canada's largest university, one of the top 20 universities in the

world. I'm speaking, of course, of the University of Toronto. This world-class institution is producing not only great scholars but also well-educated and well-prepared young individuals who are ready to enter the workforce to help Ontario compete in the new global economy. Indeed, one of my own staff, my OLIP intern, Justin, is a recent graduate from this institution, and he's doing a marvelous job.

I'm equally as proud of OCAD, the Ontario College of Art and Design, the province's premier art and design university. This place has produced some of Canada's best-known artists and designers.

I was recently at the Sharp Centre's 10th anniversary. The progress this institution has experienced over the years is tremendous. The students' work can be seen throughout the riding. If you ever get a chance, go to their annual graduation exhibition. By the way, next year will be the 100th centennial exhibition. Last year, it was a good mix of more than 550 graduating students working in 12 undergrad programs, presenting their final thesis work to an audience of more than 26,000 guests. You'll get a chance to see, and to purchase, some excellent art from these bright and hard-working young individuals in this province.

Throughout the election period, I had the opportunity of running into many seniors in my riding. What's unique about these seniors is their diversity, but what's common is a rich heritage and strong sense of community. I know that by 2016, for the first time, people over 65 will account for a larger share of the population than children aged zero to 14. That's why we need to look after them. As elected public servants, we must stand firm to ensure our elderly can age with dignity and security. I would like to commend the work that our minister responsible for seniors, the Honourable Mario Sergio, has done, but we also must continue to support him in delivering these promises that we made during the recent campaign.

I've listened to many challenges throughout the riding. One of them has been accessing health care for these seniors. Their challenges are very unique to my riding compared to other places in the province. For other places, accessibility may be an issue of the physical proximity of the doctors; for my riding, which has many unique, diverse communities, our challenge is language barriers. For the aging members of the Italian, Portuguese or Chinese communities, that is a serious problem, where a patient's ability to communicate with their health care provider is limited.

I'm doing my best to understand these issues in greater depth. Just this last weekend, I visited the Mon Sheong Foundation's Christmas community party, where I heard the seniors again echo our announcement previously. They agree with our direction for the Aging at Home Strategy.

Another issue during the campaign, I learned, is the affordability of staying in their community. The recent spike of real estate values in the downtown core has made it very challenging for seniors to stay in their community. I'm glad that our government has introduced a

few measures to help seniors, such as the Ontario Senior Homeowners' Property Tax Grant.

We've got to keep our seniors engaged and active. I'm very happy to learn about programs like the Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant and the Seniors Community Grant Program, announced last year by the Premier. I'm looking forward to more announcements like that, and I'll work hard in support of the minister in delivering on this mandate to our seniors.

City planning and the decisions that define how cities and our neighbourhoods are built—the city planning issue is a very popular issue at the door. We often hear that the OMB is hampering or running counter to some of their principles. I'm of the belief that these decisions must be made locally and should stay local. My predecessor has introduced a private member's bill to try to tackle some of those challenges. Although I don't agree with the content of the bill, I do agree that the OMB needs to be reformed.

In conclusion, I stand here, humbled, in this Legislature as a proud young member of our Liberal caucus under the true progressive Premier, Kathleen Wynne, who has received a majority mandate from the people of Ontario.

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I stand as a proud father, husband and Canadian who calls Ontario home. I am humbled by the trust given by the people of my community.

I've outlined some of the issues that are dearest to my heart, and those are the issues I heard at the door and I will be working very hard to combat.

Lastly, I want to thank the people who supported me. Without them, I would not be here, like the member from Halton just mentioned. I want to thank my mentor, a former member of this Legislature, Mr. Gerry Phillips. He taught me many things, many campaign tips, but I think most importantly he taught me how to be a decent person. I want to thank my campaign co-managers, Jason Alexander and Ted Lojko, but more importantly, I want to thank my family. Without them, I would not be here. I know my wife, Sophia Qiao, is watching this. I want to thank her for all of the understanding and all of the support. To my colleagues, thank you very much for the warm welcome. I've made a few friends; Percy is right there.

I want to wish everyone a merry Christmas and a very happy new year. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 25, 2014, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Bradley has moved third reading of Bill 21, An Act to safeguard health care integrity by enacting the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014 and by amending certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions.

Is it the pleasure of this House that this motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Do not change the channel.

“Pursuant to standing order 38(h), I request that the vote on third reading of Bill 21 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, December 10, 2014.” That is signed by the chief government whip, Mr. Delaney.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

CHILDREN’S SERVICES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member for Hamilton Mountain has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given on December 4 by the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes. I’ll recognize the member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I’m pleased to have the opportunity to address once again the issue of a child having to be made a crown ward to receive the services he needs. Honestly, I should not have to go through this process to ensure that I have the minister’s attention for this very important matter, because this is neither unique nor a new situation.

In May 2005, the Ombudsman published his report *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. The report presented his findings from an investigation into parents being forced to place their children with severe disabilities into the custody of the children’s aid society to obtain necessary care. This report went into great detail on seven different cases, but let me just quote from the very first paragraph of the report:

“Jennifer Bray’s story is not unique. Her 11-year-old son, Wesley, is under the care of a children’s aid society and her custodial rights have been legally suspended. If she wants to visit Wesley, she needs to report to the children’s aid society. She has had to turn over her son’s health card. Technically, she has lost the right to make legal decisions on Wesley’s behalf. Yet Jennifer Bray is not a neglectful or incapable parent. She is a loving and able mother. Fate gave her a child who, because of his severe developmental delay, is unmanageable. In return, we in Ontario have given her something almost as cruel. We have given her the choice of either abandoning him, or going without the care he requires. We are making her give up her rights as a parent even though she is not standing in the way of him getting the support he needs.

We are doing this for no good reason other than bureaucracy, technicality and entrenched position.”

Of course, in addition to telling a series of tragic stories, the Ombudsman made some recommendations in his report. Among them, he recommended that the Ministry of Children and Youth Services should immediately ensure that in situations such as this parental rights are restored and that funding is provided for residential treatment outside of the child welfare system. That was in 2005.

In 2013 and into the start of this year, I, along with other members of the Select Committee on Developmental Services, heard testimony from parents of children with severe developmental disabilities. Here is part of what was reported in the committee’s interim report.

“One mother struggling to look after both her terminally ill husband and her severely disabled daughter told the committee that she had ‘begged’ for help. Told that there was no funding available, she made the ‘horrendous’ decision to relinquish custody by refusing to bring her daughter home from temporary respite care.” In her own words: “‘It was heartbreaking, painful, and unthinkable, but it was all we could do to cope with the situation. What we did get out, and the word ‘abandonment’ was used. It was devastating. It is my belief that our family was abandoned, and it forced us to surrender care.’”

This story became national news, and I remember meeting with that mother in October 2012 and listening as she shared with the Queen’s Park media her awful situation, a situation that no mother should have to face. Funding was finally found—but I can’t imagine what that mother endured.

Although it appears that no government ministry keeps track of cases of abandonment, the Peel Crisis Capacity Network indicated to the committee that between January 2011 and August 2013, 44 individuals were abandoned in the Peel and Halton regions.

Last week, Speaker, with this history in mind, I raised the situation being faced by Dr. Nicole Desmarais and her son Niko Leduc, of the Greater Sudbury area. Yet again, here was a mother of a child with a severe developmental disability, who was faced with the unthinkable decision to give up her parental rights so that her son could receive the treatment that he so desperately needs.

At that time, little Niko was in CPRI in London, but he was scheduled to come home the next day, which was last Friday, and he would be coming home with absolutely no supports. Niko’s disability is so severe that it’s impossible for the family to care for him at home, and the treatment he needs is certainly not available anywhere in the Sudbury area. While she wanted with all of her heart to pick up her son on Friday, Nicole Desmarais was left with no choice but to leave him there so he could get the treatment—she had to abandon him.

In addition to his treatment, this child needs the loving support of his mother—and I see I’m out of time, Speaker. But I just really need to ask the minister, again,

as I did last Thursday, do you believe that taking a child away from their mother is an acceptable way to deal with a situation like this?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I now refer to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Youth and Children Services, the member from Durham.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I would like to thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for her remarks.

Our goal is that care meets each child's unique needs whenever and wherever that need may be. In this case, ministry staff has, since the beginning, been working to develop a solution that best suits the needs of all involved.

While it would still be inappropriate to comment on the specifics of this case, it is important to note that, since 2013, we have invested close to \$900 million in mental health services. Through increased investments in child and youth mental health initiatives, we are transforming the system so children have the best access to the right services that meet their needs.

Through our comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy, 50,000 additional children and youth are receiving mental health support. We have hired more than 770 mental health workers for our schools and our communities. We have also begun the implementation of the new Ontario Special Needs Strategy. The new strategy incorporates the feedback we have received from families and clinical experts.

We have heard from families that navigating the service system can be a stressful and tiring process. That's why we will be hiring service coordinators to make planning for children's care easier on families.

We have heard from experts that early intervention is of paramount importance. That's why, as part of this strategy, we will introduce new preschool developmental screening that will connect children and families to the services they need sooner.

We also heard that access to rehabilitation services is inconsistent as children move through the system. That's why we are integrating the delivery of these services by making access seamless from birth through the school years.

Transforming how services are delivered is important, but increasing investments is important as well, and we continue to increase our investments in Sudbury. This year, nine agencies received over \$11 million to provide children's mental health services in the region. This

includes the Child and Family Centre, as well as the Children's Community Network.

We have also provided close to \$3 million for developmental services and children with complex special needs. We continue to increase supports in Sudbury for children, youth and their families, and yet the NDP continues to vote against them.

Across the province, we increased funding by \$5 million for children's treatment centres. This meant that the CTC at Sudbury Regional Hospital could serve more children, yet the NDP opposed it.

The budget also expanded our Student Nutrition Program so that organizations such as the Sudbury Better Beginnings Better Futures association could serve more children. The NDP voted against that as well.

Our government continues to support Sudbury, yet the NDP are nowhere to be found. They like to pretend that they stand up for children and families; they like to pretend that they stand up for the north, yet at every opportunity they have had to show their support they have been missing in action. Our government continues to invest in our children and families, and we continue to invest in Sudbury.

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services is a great example of how our government continues to make these investments. Child and Community Resources received more than \$5 million this year to provide autism services. The School Support Program received over \$1.3 million.

Since 2003, we have increased funding to the Sudbury and Manitoulin children's aid society by 44%. We provide funding to the Sudbury YMCA for the Youth in Transition Worker Program to support youth leaving the care of children's aid societies. We also provide the YMCA with funding for the Youth Opportunities Strategy. This has helped 130 young people find employment.

Our government continues to make investments so that children and youth have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

Miss Monique Taylor: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member. There are no points of order. Both sides were given five minutes.

As a result, there being no further debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1814.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiles, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Sudbury	

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Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
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des comptes publics**

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Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
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permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
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Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Wednesday 10 December 2014

Mercredi 10 décembre 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 décembre 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Madame Meilleur moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Madame Meilleur.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Scarborough Southwest.

Today, I would like to begin second reading debate on the proposed Protection of Public Participation Act.

L'Ontario est doté d'un bon système judiciaire, mais il n'est pas parfait. Les litiges sont coûteux et longs. Notre gouvernement sait bien que cette réalité de notre système de justice doit changer. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous travaillons avec nos partenaires du secteur de la justice pour mettre en place diverses approches.

Last month, I launched Better Justice Together, a strategy aimed at building a more accessible justice system. While many of our plans will be adopted incrementally, there are many things we can do now to bring about real, positive change.

Raising the legal aid eligibility threshold on November 1 was one such thing. It has expanded access to legal aid for many low-income people. Implementing this bill could be our next step forward.

As I mentioned a moment ago, going to court can be expensive and time-consuming for everyone, but this is of particular concern when one party has much greater resources than the other. In a strategic suit, that party chooses to exploit the imbalance by taking a weaker op-

ponent to court with a frivolous claim. Sometimes, these cases have little or no merit. Most are dropped before the lawsuit goes to trial, sometimes just weeks later. Meanwhile, the damage is done. Financially and emotionally drained, the target of a strategic suit is effectively silenced.

Comme mon prédécesseur, l'honorable John Gerretsen, l'a dit simplement, nous ne pensons pas que ce soit juste. C'est pourquoi je suis fière de redonner vie à ce projet de loi, qui équipera nos tribunaux d'une méthode plus efficace pour reconnaître les poursuites stratégiques et les régler.

Le projet de loi vise à protéger la liberté d'expression. Il vise à faire triompher la justice. Il vise à faire des progrès en tant que province et en tant que société. Et il vise à atteindre un équilibre important, à l'avantage de toutes les parties à un litige.

Ces deux dernières années, les députés ont beaucoup entendu parler de ce projet de loi : ici, à l'Assemblée législative, dans les couloirs de cet édifice; dans la presse; dans les lettres exprimant des inquiétudes; et dans les lettres de soutien.

L'équilibre est un thème qui revient sans arrêt : le besoin d'établir un équilibre qui mettra fin aux poursuites abusives tout en autorisant des actions légitimes. Je peux vous assurer que nous avons entendu tout ce qu'on nous a dit. L'équilibre est une caractéristique clé de ce projet de loi.

D'un côté, il aide ceux qui estiment avoir été injustement ciblés en prévoyant un traitement accéléré de leur plainte. Il est certain que la question de l'accès à la justice est une question sur laquelle mon ministère et ses partenaires travaillent d'arrache-pied.

Meanwhile, this proposal could go a long way towards easing the financial and emotional strain of defending oneself against a strategic lawsuit. It would do so by giving our courts a way to quickly identify and deal with such a suit, with minimal time or expense to any party.

Catching strategic lawsuits early also has benefits for the courts, by minimizing the amount of valuable public resources wasted on those matters. This, of course, benefits all court users.

Since the bill will give the court a speedy way to identify a case as strategic, the plaintiff who has been accused of launching a strategic suit would not be greatly delayed by the motion. Those with legitimate claims would be heard through the normal course.

We recognize that reputation is one of the most valuable assets a person or a business can possess.

Now, some members may have read about objections to this bill from the forestry industry and some northern

municipalities. With respect, their concerns are not well-founded. The bill does not open the floodgates to destructive criticism of our natural resources industries. It does not create a so-called “licence to slander.” Instead, the bill aims to protect expression of matters of public interest. What the bill would do is let a court review lawsuits brought against such expression at an early stage. It would then be up to the court to decide whether the expression at issue is likely to cause serious harm. If so, the court may allow the lawsuit to continue in the normal course of litigation.

I strongly believe that the law must defend reputation, but not at any cost and not in every case. I do not believe that a mere technical case—without actual harm—should be allowed to suppress the kind of democratic expression that is crucial for our democracy.

That’s why 65 municipalities have resolved that this bill should pass. That’s why the Ontario Bar Association, which represents interests on all sides of litigation, has said it welcomes the bill. That is why the Canadian Civil Liberties Association wants the bill passed.

Mr. Speaker, this is about identifying strategic lawsuits and putting the parties to a dispute on a more equal footing. If legitimate harm has been done, I would encourage anyone who has been defamed to use the existing legal means before them to seek redress.

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Atteindre l’équilibre prudent entre les intérêts en jeu que je viens de décrire n’a pas été chose facile, et c’est la raison pour laquelle l’élaboration du projet de loi a pris tant de temps. Il y a quatre ans, face aux inquiétudes croissantes à l’égard des poursuites stratégiques en Ontario, notre gouvernement a pris la décision d’examiner la question et de convoquer un comité d’experts. Nous voulions savoir ce qui pourrait être fait, le cas échéant, pour régler ce problème qui n’avait jusque-là touché principalement que les États-Unis.

Four years ago, amid growing concerns about strategic lawsuits here in Ontario, our government made a decision to study the issue and convened an expert panel. The panel was itself balanced between plaintiff and media lawyers, including some of the foremost thinkers on issues surrounding the balance of protection of public participation with the protection of reputation and economic interests. The panel was chaired by Dr. Mayo Moran, dean of the University of Toronto law school, a respected academic and expert in constitutional law and the private law of civil wrongs. The other two members were Peter Downard, partner at Fasken Martineau, who has written many legal texts on libel and defamation, and Brian MacLeod Rogers, adjunct professor at Ryerson University School of Journalism. As practising barristers, these individuals brought great expertise on the rules of civil procedure and courtroom dynamics.

All these outstanding individuals were present at the launch of Bill 83 last year. It was a proud moment for the panel members, whom our government had tasked with a great challenge. Specifically, we asked them to determine: a test the court could use to quickly recognize a

strategic lawsuit; an appropriate remedy for strategic suits; an appropriate limit to the protection of any proposed legislation; appropriate parties to benefit from those protections, and finally, what methods could be used to prevent abuse of any further legislation aimed at strategic lawsuits.

Après des mois de recherche et de consultation auprès de divers particuliers et groupes tels que l’Association canadienne des libertés civiles, l’Association canadienne du droit de l’environnement, l’Association du Barreau de l’Ontario, l’Association des infirmières et infirmiers autorisés de l’Ontario et bien d’autres organismes, le comité a produit un rapport détaillé et a posé la base d’une démarche future.

Monsieur le Président, avec quelques ajustements, le projet de loi que nous avons devant nous aujourd’hui est le fruit direct du travail du comité, s’inspirant notamment des leçons tirées ailleurs—aux États-Unis, au Québec et en Colombie-Britannique. Le projet de loi propose une solution unique au problème des poursuites stratégiques qui se fonde sur les lois et libertés existantes en Ontario et les renforce.

The proposed legislation contains many important provisions that support our goal of building a fairer society and a stronger, more accessible justice system. Thanks to the efforts of the panel members and the many groups and individuals who have contributed to its development, this bill reflects the variety of perspectives necessary to achieve a truly balanced approach to addressing the issue of strategic litigation.

Que vous vous sentiez réduit au silence par une personne aux poches plus larges que les vôtres ou que vous croyiez que votre réputation durement acquise a été injustement ternie, ce projet de loi a été élaboré dans l’idée de protéger vos intérêts.

Today, I urge all members to stand together in support of our proposed bill, the Protection of Public Participation Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Good morning. I rise in the House today to continue debate on the proposed Protection of Public Participation Act. I am pleased to once again be part of this landmark bill, which seeks to balance the protection of public participation and freedom of expression and the protection of reputation and economic interests. I strongly believe, Mr. Speaker, that this bill will create important benefits for both the province’s justice system and the many people and businesses it serves.

I just want to talk now about how strategic lawsuits work. It is widely understood that robust public debate is a vital component of a healthy, well-functioning democracy. This freedom to speak up and speak out on the things that matter is particularly important when we feel that the well-being of our families and communities is at stake. Strategic lawsuits curtail that freedom by discouraging people from speaking out and, in doing so, interfere with the democratic functioning of our society.

It is also important that we recognize the strain that frivolous lawsuits place on our province's busy court system. The time and energy our courts spend dealing with strategic litigation is a misuse of public resources that I find unacceptable. It's important that the time and attention of our courts be reserved for serious, legitimate complaints, where a lawsuit is a genuine means to address a harm committed by one party against another—not a way to bully an opponent.

Mr. Speaker, with this bill, our government is seeking to send a clear signal that the practice of using lawsuits to exploit a weaker party or a busy court system will not be tolerated. I just want to talk a bit about how it works. As the Attorney General noted earlier, the work of developing this complex proposal was not an easy task, but one that required the help of an expert panel. The expert panel embraced it. After months of consultation and a careful study of the issue, the panel produced a truly unique and balanced solution that not only built upon, but strengthened, existing Ontario laws.

I would like now to take this opportunity to outline a few key aspects of the legislation we are proposing, which require changes to three existing laws: the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act.

First of all, the centerpiece of our legislation: Amendments to the Courts of Justice Act are meant to create a fast-track review process for all lawsuits alleged to be brought for strategic reasons.

It is important to keep in mind that strategic suits do not pertain to just any dispute; rather, they must be matters of public interest. For example, in a defamation claim, the suit would be considered strategic if the act of suing an individual has the effect of shutting down public debate on a matter that could reasonably be expected to be of concern to an entire community. In this situation, the provision will give the person making the comment—the defendant—the opportunity to ask the court to dismiss the case before a potentially long and expensive court battle gets under way.

At this party's request, the court would use a special test to determine whether or not the lawsuit should be allowed to proceed. In applying the test, the court would ask the following three questions:

Firstly, is the lawsuit about a matter of public interest? It would be up to the defendant to convince the court that the dispute is not simply a private matter, but that the public good is truly at stake.

Second, if it is a matter of public interest, does the case of the plaintiff—the person to whom the comments pertain—have substantial merit? This is what the plaintiff would have to demonstrate.

Finally, in addition to proving that the case has sufficient merit, our test includes a third step, of asking that the plaintiff—the person to whom the comments pertain—show that he or she has suffered or is likely to suffer harm serious enough to justify stopping public expression or debate on a matter of public interest. We know that the United Kingdom and Australia have taken

similar steps in recent years after seeing their own defamation laws misused by stronger parties—mainly large corporations—against weaker opponents. If this harm, or risk of harm, cannot be shown, then under the proposed legislation the case would be dismissed.

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Mr. Speaker, speed is a crucial aspect of this provision, because it provides clarity for all parties while carefully balancing their interests quickly, and before significant amounts of time and money have been expended. Under the proposed fast-track review process, the request to dismiss the lawsuit must be heard within 60 days of the party's motion to have the test applied, and before the case could proceed any further in court. This expedited process is a key provision in nearly every US statute of this kind.

Secondly, I want to talk about the amendments to the Libel and Slander Act. I want to tell members about two other related changes that are proposed through this bill, which would amend both the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act.

Under the current law, conversations between two or more people on a matter of shared concern are to be considered privileged. In other words, because the parties share a direct interest in a particular topic, their conversations about that matter are protected by law. That means that neither person can be sued for libel or slander so long as they are speaking truthfully. So under the current law, when a group of people gather to discuss a shared problem, they can be confident that those conversations will be protected. So long as they are without malice, those conversations are what we call privileged. However, that same group of citizens is no longer protected in the event that their conversations are reported by a third party, such as a reporter or blogger. Like the chilling effect of a strategic lawsuit, this nuance in libel law can deter frank conversations about matters of public concern, potentially preventing an important matter from receiving the open discussion it deserves just because somebody records a conversation on a smartphone.

I'm glad that with this provision, we can support our province's strongly held democratic values, even in a seemingly small way.

Thirdly, I want to talk a little bit about the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. Our proposed bill would change the law governing procedures before regulatory bodies and administrative tribunals. Currently, administrative tribunals may hold hearings to determine if one party should pay the other's legal costs after a case has been decided. These hearings are conducted in person, which can be costly and time-consuming, especially for vulnerable parties.

Our proposed amendment to the Statutory Powers Procedure Act would allow parties to make their arguments about how costs should be awarded in a written submission to the tribunal. Like the proposed fast-track review process, it is our hope that this provision would encourage cases to be dealt with more quickly, contributing to a more efficient justice system that makes the best possible use of public resources.

The proposed Protection of Public Participation Act contains many important provisions that support our goal of building a more accessible justice system and a stronger democracy. We want to create faster, more efficient civil processes that provide better clarity for the parties involved. We want to safeguard reputations and protect economic interests. We want to empower our citizens to take part in the democratic process, which is far more than marking an X on a ballot every few years, but is about being informed and engaging the public in participation publicly.

Our bill supports some of the most cherished values of people living in a free and democratic society—our most cherished values as Ontarians. So today, I urge all members in this House to stand together to support these freedoms and values by supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to be here this morning speaking on Bill 52, the Protection of Public Participation Act. I know this legislation has been out there over the last couple of years. We've had a number of cases and some planning decisions where people have asked the government or people to bring private members' bills or a government bill forward to address the concerns, but primarily the concerns where the development industry may want to actually give a threat to someone who has any kind of an objection to a certain project. That I can support.

I'll be interested in the debate on this. This is the lead-off today. I'm not sure this is a kind of bill they'll want to time-allocate—not like they did Bill 10. And now we know why they wanted to time-allocate Bill 10: because there were 29,000 incidents in licensed daycare, and for some reason we had to get that bill through the House quickly.

Mr. Speaker, you know what? This place has become a charade. That's the reality. Here we are pushing legislation through and then we're dealing with basically nothing legislation that will take months and months and months to get through. This is the kind of bill they'll want to travel. They'll probably want to travel it to Thunder Bay and up to the forestry country and way down to Windsor. But, boy, we couldn't travel Bill 10. That was too important for our children, on the safety issues. Now that we know there were 29,000 incidents, six deaths in licensed daycares, we know why Bill 10 was put through the House at rapid speed. It's an embarrassment to be here, and it's an embarrassment to work with the Minister of Education and the Minister of Energy, when I see the kinds of comments that were made yesterday.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of my colleagues and on behalf of the people of Timiskaming-Cochrane. This is a very important issue, and it has been a very important issue in the past in Timiskaming-Cochrane because we've gone through a period in our history

when some of our residents were served by SLAPP suits during the Adams mine—it was a big issue in our area and it almost caused the destruction of several family businesses. That's why this legislation is necessary.

But we have to be extremely, extremely careful how this legislation is put forward and make sure that everyone understands it, because we also had cases in my part of the world where very well organized groups have used the courts to basically hurt jobs. That's something that we have to be very careful with. We have to make sure that the public is protected; we also have to make sure that people who drive our economy aren't attacked for things they didn't do, and that's a big issue. I think that's one of the things that, in my part of the world, the forestry industry is still worried about, and rightfully so.

Having said that, we know how important this legislation is. I know it personally, when I was sued for Adams mine and I almost lost my farm because of the lack of this type of legislation. I know how important it is. We know how important it is in Timiskaming. But it has to be balanced and everyone has to understand going in how it's going to impact all sectors of the economy and all the people of the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: I'm pleased to be able to speak for a couple of minutes to this important piece of legislation. I think back to a couple of careers that I've held, once as a newspaper reporter and a second time as a town councillor. I know as a newspaper reporter, more than once someone or an organization that did not appreciate the coverage and the scrutiny we were applying to their activities and their organizations would threaten to sue us, or even go so far as to file papers. Thankfully, I've always had a good publisher who said, "It's not if you're sued, it's only if you're sued successfully, that we need to talk."

But for those who don't have the backing of a large organization, it is extremely anti-democratic to be able to pour cold water on a citizen's right to talk and to raise important issues. So I'm happy to see that, if passed, this legislation will protect the right of Ontario residents to speak out on matters that are of importance to us.

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At the same time, I think it's important to understand that this legislation provides some balance. It balances the interests of defendants and plaintiffs in defamation suits. It balances the protection of public participation and freedom of expression against the protection of reputation and economic interests. I think that's important because, especially in today's social media world, it's very easy for people to attack reputation and economic interest.

I think this legislation will set the balance and provide our justice system with some good direction so that they can provide balance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I listened with interest to some of the comments and certainly to the speeches that

were given this morning on this SLAPP legislation. It's interesting to hear about balance in legislation; certainly, that's something we all need to look at and strive for. It's quite interesting, the balance that was not struck yesterday with the Auditor General's report; it's a terrible, terrible thing.

I would like to say that this legislation protects the people from frivolous lawsuits, and it's something that the people of Ontario have looked forward to. But there's something else I'd like to bring up. You know, we had over 200 municipalities support another piece of legislation that we hoped would be brought forward last year, a decision that should have been made on joint and several liability. Yet this government ignored it. It's similar to this, where municipalities can get sued for just being 1% at fault for an accident or something that happens in a municipality. They ignored that, yet they bring the SLAPP legislation forward.

I would suggest that if we're going to have a balanced government, we have to look at all aspects of law in Ontario. For some reason, the Auditor General just completely ignored over 200 municipalities on joint and several liability—just ignored them. I would suggest that she take another look at this type of thing. It's something that municipalities have asked me not to give up on and I certainly won't.

I'm glad the government is looking at the SLAPP legislation. I think it's something that's been important to the people of Ontario and I look forward to hearing more on the debate. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Attorney General has two minutes.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the members from Simcoe North, Timiskaming—Cochrane, Newmarket—Aurora and Perth—Wellington.

I listened very carefully to the members from the two opposition parties. I'm not sure if they're going to support it, by what they were saying, but I hope that they will. Because using intimidation tactics to silence one's opponents is a misuse of our democratic system. It's a misuse of our court system, one of the central institutions of a fair and democratic society.

If passed, this legislation will allow courts to quickly identify and deal with strategic lawsuits, minimizing the emotional and financial strain on defendants, as well as the waste of court resources.

I'm sure there's not one person in this room who has not heard about someone who was a victim of these strategic lawsuits. Our proposed legislation strikes a balance that will help ensure abusive litigation is stopped, but legitimate action can continue.

This proposed legislation is about preventing strategic lawsuits. Anyone who has a legitimate claim of libel or slander should not be discouraged by this legislation. We're proposing a made-in-Ontario approach to address the issue of strategic lawsuits based on consensus, recommendations of an expert advisory panel and extensive stakeholder consultation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the three experts of our panel for their wise advice on this

bill. Also, I want to thank my predecessor, Minister John Gerretsen, for introducing this bill, the Protection of Public Participation Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise this morning to talk about anti-SLAPP. I think for the purposes of people who are listening, though, I have to first do a bit of a legislative lesson on why we are not talking about the Auditor General's report. A very substantial, damning—can I use “damning”?—report came out late yesterday afternoon. It's all over the newspapers this morning, and I'm sure if anyone is tuning in now they are questioning why we are talking about the anti-SLAPP legislation and not some of the terrible, terrible indictments in the Auditor General's annual report.

It is, of course, because by legislative precedent we must speak to the bills that the government brings forward, and today, of course, they brought forward the anti-SLAPP legislation, which means that I am not allowed to make reference and talk about specifics in the Auditor General's report because it doesn't relate to the chosen topic that the House leader of the government has brought forward.

To that point, I will talk about Bill 52, the Protection of Public Participation Act. I think it's important to put this bill in context. To give credit where credit is due, there have been a number of private members' bills on this very specific topic. One, of course, is from the now leader of the third party and the member from Hamilton Centre and, of course, the government House leader, the member from Ottawa Centre. Both, in previous Parliaments, in previous governments, have brought forward very similar legislation to Bill 52. We also had, I think it was, Bill 83 in the previous government where, to the minister's point, John Gerretsen, now retired, as the Attorney General also brought forward this anti-SLAPP legislation.

This bill came forward as a result of a report from 2010. There was a panel struck at the request of the Attorney General to study how to ensure that we could actually come forward and bring protections for people who want to have a public voice on issues of concern to the general public, but also, quite frankly, protect the rights of people who want to move forward on ideas or make changes to their own community. So I think we would call it, to quote Rohinton Mistry, that “fine balance.” The Protection of Public Participation Act attempts to do that in its third reiteration—fourth reiteration, if you include the private members' bills—and I would like to take some time this morning to go over past cases that are commonly referred to when we talk about SLAPPs.

SLAPP, of course, is short form for strategic litigation against public participation. I think that giving some specific examples of SLAPPs, or at the very least what are commonly accepted as examples of SLAPPs, will be beneficial because it allows us and our constituents to understand just what we are discussing here today.

I know when I've spoken about this issue with people before, it often falls flat. If you have not been part of, or the victim of, a SLAPP, it's probably something that you don't spend a lot of time thinking about. To be honest, it can be considered rather legal and trivial to the average person, but that's why it's important to reflect on some specific SLAPPs. It puts into context the issue, and allows us to see the human side and the human impacts of this. When we debate these things in the legal lexicon, it can often become muddled and abstract, but when we focus on specific examples, specific people, that's when we can truly start to see what a difference legislation can make.

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I also think it's important for our constituents and the people watching at home to know how SLAPPs typically come about, so that they are aware of what a SLAPP is and when or how to spot one. That's why I will be using some of my time to reflect on past SLAPP cases and their various effects and motivations.

I also intend to cover the bill itself and then analyze how the measures contained within Bill 52 match or don't match with the problems demonstrated by the examples I will go over. Some of these cases, as you will see, are quite daunting, and the fact of the matter is that we need to make sure this legislation is capable of doing what it is meant to do, because no Ontarian should have to choose between having a say on a development or a change in their community or risking being sued into financial ruin.

Finally, I will conclude by summarizing why SLAPPs should absolutely be stopped from occurring and thus why this legislation should be supported by all members of the House.

Bill 52 is a reintroduction, as I said, of Bill 83, which died on the order paper when the government called the election this spring. It's important to mention that many other jurisdictions have some form of anti-SLAPP legislation already in place. For example, roughly half of the states in the US have some form of anti-SLAPP legislation already in place. In addition, England and Australia, which, if you're a legal expert, are more closely matched to our system here in Canada, have some form of anti-SLAPP legislation as well.

Bill 52 and its predecessors stem from the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel, which submitted its final report to the Attorney General over four years ago, in October 2010. Don't ever accuse the Ontario government of moving quickly. Of course, that's what we are really talking about here today: SLAPPs. A SLAPP is a lawsuit that is brought against an individual for the primary purpose of silencing that individual's public opinions. SLAPPs are almost always some form of libel or slander allegation and almost always are for unrealistic and unreasonable amounts in damages. That's the point of a SLAPP: not to win the lawsuit, but rather to scare the defendants so that they dare not speak out against a claim.

The reason that this is particularly problematic, however, aside from a gross misuse and waste of taxpayers' dollars by clogging down our justice system, is because

it's not only an injustice to the defendant but also to the community and free speech. This is because the community's planning procedures are manipulated. Community members who could have valuable contributions to make are instead intimidated out of commenting. Another word for the SLAPP is—I can't remember it—the ability to silence someone, cease-and-desist letters; there are all kinds of ways to say it. The end result is a community planning process without the community. This is an entirely undesirable situation.

That being said, while typically SLAPPs involve developers and residents, there are also a number of instances and examples where this is not, in fact, the case. But I will get into that later on in my details.

For now, going into a discussion on past SLAPPs, please bear in mind the key factor here is whether the lawsuit's prime function is either to prevent someone from participating in a public process or to punish them for doing so. That is a certain principle that's important when discussing SLAPPs: that an individual has had their rights to express their opinion severely limited due to coercion.

I would now like to move on and discuss two specific SLAPP cases, very different in their examples. They are unique from each other because each of them involves a different type of claimant pursuing the SLAPP. They are identical with one another, however, in that in each case, the claimant has clearly pursued litigation for the purposes of silencing or punishing the defendant. It is this second point that primarily qualifies each as a SLAPP. In all cases I'm about to discuss, however, I'm not going to refer to either of the litigants by their names, as I don't believe it's relevant to the purposes of Bill 52. These cases are to illustrate SLAPPs, not to consider the particular individuals involved. As such, I will refer to the party bringing forward the SLAPP as the claimant and the party the SLAPP is being used against as the defendant.

The first SLAPP I'd like to discuss actually occurred in British Columbia. This SLAPP arose from the following context: The claimant wanted to convert his land, which was forested, into farmland. To do this, however, he had to dump approximately 750,000 cubic metres of soil on his property to properly level it so that it would be sustainable for farming. But in order to do this, he needed a permit, and so in October 2009, he submitted a permit application to his local township.

Now, the defendant in this case owns land very near to the claimant's property. When the defendant became aware of the claimant's permit application, she became quite concerned about a possible negative impact on the streams that flowed through his land. The defendant also happened to be a member of a local organization whose mission it is to protect and enhance the integrity of the watersheds in the area, so the defendant decided to take action against the claimant's permit application. Consequently, the defendant and the local water preservation organization she was part of began speaking out against the claimant's permit application. The organization came

out with written material opposing the permit, and the defendant produced a report outlining the potential damage that the claimant's permit might cause to the local watershed. There was also a meeting held where the defendant spoke about her objections to the claimant's permit application and her concerns for the wider region.

In light of all these developments, the local township decided to put the claimant's permit application on hold. The township argued that it needed more time to measure the environmental impact of the application. On September 1, 2010, two weeks before the township placed the permit on hold, the claimant sued the defendant, the organization which she was involved with and another individual, claiming \$13 million in damages against all three. The claim against the defendant herself was for \$5.5 million.

The defendant's lawyer soon advised the claimant via letter that his lawsuit was bound to fail because it disclosed no viable cause of action. In essence, the claimant had no case as there were no facts to support the lawsuit. On February 9, 2011, the defendant even offered to pay the claimant \$2,000 in full settlement of his claim, but to no avail.

The claimant made serious allegations against the defendant, including that she made unfounded and false statements to local residents about his permit application. The claimant argued that this was done for the purpose of gathering signatures on a petition opposing his application and for the purpose of intentionally harming him. He also alleged that the defendant organized public meetings only to spread false information about his permit application and that the defendant made false statements about the permit to the local member of the provincial Legislature. The claimant also argued that the defendant endangered the public by using a low-flying aircraft to photograph him and acted maliciously by making false statements to make him lose his farming career.

All in all, the claimant basically argued that the defendant defamed him and conspired to injure him and his property. The claimant made similar allegations about the local water preservation organization as well.

So to recount, an individual, the claimant, sought to obtain a permit to alter his property, and their neighbour, the defendant, objected to this alteration on the basis that it would have had a negative effect on the larger area in the community. Speaker, clearly, this is an example of an individual staying involved in their community and trying to participate in its growth and development. In other words, this was clearly an individual participating in a public matter, namely, whether or not the claimant's proposed alterations would have an effect on the larger area the public inhabits.

Thus, by undertaking such vigorous and overwhelming legal action in response, the claimant has already partially demonstrated this case to be a SLAPP, as one could conceivably argue that the claimant is attempting to punish the defendant via a lawsuit. What further demonstrates this to be a SLAPP, however, is the claimant's clear lack of interest in actually pursuing the case as a

legitimate legal matter—and this is a very important part of Bill 52, that shortened process to ensure that the legal system can basically do a review and say, “Is it a SLAPP or isn't it?” Because there are going to be examples, Speaker, and we can all name some, where people and businesses have been defamed, and they have absolutely every right to defend their character and their business. Bill 52 does not prevent that.

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For example, when the defendant brought an application to dismiss the claimant's lawsuit and provided notice to the claimant, he didn't attend the hearing. That being said, all the material the claimant filed with the court was still considered, even though he didn't show up. What the judge determined was that the claimant had provided no evidence of his allegations against the defendant. The judge eventually concluded that the claimant had merely asserted what he believed had occurred with no evidence to support his claims. The judge determined that not only had the defendant not acted maliciously or intended to harm the claimant but was instead merely exercising her right of free speech to disagree with the claimant's permit application, and as a result, the defendant was naturally voicing her opposition to the permit application and had done nothing unlawful whatsoever. Clearly, Speaker, there can be no mistaking this for anything short of a typical SLAPP suit.

To demonstrate the negative effects that SLAPPs can have, however, consider the fallout from this one example I have discussed. As a result of the SLAPP brought against her and the ordeal she went through fighting it, the defendant ended her community involvement out of fear that she may again be the target of another SLAPP. She stopped attending the water preservation organization's meetings and stopped participating in other environmental causes. Furthermore, she no longer gave advice to her neighbours on similar issues and discontinued her volunteer work.

Just think of the negative impact this SLAPP caused the defendant, to say nothing of the community. Here we have an extremely engaged citizen who is concerned about her neighbours and her community's well-being, and thanks to a SLAPP, she is totally shell-shocked into forgoing all efforts to improve her community. I think it says a lot about the kind of damage SLAPPs can cause.

The defendant ended up paying over \$20,000 in legal fees and over \$4,000 in disbursements due to this SLAPP, all because she wanted to be involved in her community's future. And that is just the individual defendant in this case. When it comes to the organization she was involved with, the damages, respectively, were just as onerous.

The SLAPP had a severe negative impact on the work of the organization, as all of its time had been spent on defending the lawsuit. There were little resources or time left to devote to organizing other activities or initiatives. The SLAPP basically silenced the organization, as it did not speak out against the claimant's permit application from the moment the SLAPP was filed. Some would say

that was the complete and 100% intention. Unfortunately, as a result of this litigation, the organization was forced to consider ceasing operations altogether once the SLAPP had been settled. Ultimately, the directors of the organization did buy public liability insurance, mostly because they were concerned about future SLAPPs, or litigation chill.

Eventually, on May 25, 2011, the claimant's claim was dismissed, with costs awarded to the defendants. Speaker, this is the epitome of a SLAPP: long, fruitless, expensive and highly damaging. This legal action was clearly brought forward to limit the defendant's ability and desire to participate in public matters.

This is an example of a private individual pursuing a SLAPP against another private individual. Again, it is, for the same reason as the next example, limiting or stopping public participation.

I want to pause for a minute and talk briefly about how technology may impact Bill 52. Because this bill is a result of a report from over four years ago, in 2010, because it is basically a reintroduction, based on Bill 83 in the last government, I think that we actually have an opportunity, at the public participation stage—I truly hope that we have fulsome public hearings on this, because, if nothing else, this anti-SLAPP legislation is about the ability of the public to participate in a discussion for their benefit. I would hate to see the government have closure or suggest that we need very truncated public hearings on a bill that is all about public participation.

I'm not going to try to foreshadow what is going to happen with discussions in House leaders', but I can assure you that if we end up having a very limited public hearing process for Bill 52, I'm going to make some hay with that, because that's all wrong. This is all about public participation, and we'd better have a committee that actually travels and is prepared to listen and is prepared to come forward with amendments.

I want to talk briefly about Twitter and Facebook. In the 2010 report, they don't talk a lot about how that impacts SLAPPs, if Twitter and Facebook posts would be considered when they talk about defamation or have issues there. So I think there is an opportunity for some positive amendments that will basically acknowledge the role that technology has in both participation at a political level, of course, and as an aid to informing our communities.

But I digress. I'm going to go to my next example. This offers perhaps the most startling but also clear case of a SLAPP example that I can discuss here today.

In this case, the claimant was the mayor of an Ontario town—so, a politician—and the defendants were members of the town's news media. One of them was also a former town councillor. In essence, Speaker, one of the defendants was known for commenting on the town's municipal issues, not unusual in our local papers. He frequently wrote articles dealing with municipal issues as a recurring column that was published on the Internet on a local website focused on current events in the town. The other defendant was a former town councillor and was the website's moderator.

Throughout the mayor's first term in office, both defendants were vocal critics of the mayor's policies. In 2010, the mayor was running for a second term. Election day was set for October 25. On August 20, 2010, a little over two months from the election day, one of the defendants wrote an article that was critical of the mayor and posted it on the website. In it, he prompted the website's visitors to write over 50 comments about his original article. As is typical with such sites, the comments on an article appear directly beneath the article and are published online as soon as they are submitted.

There were many comments on the website in response to the article, and many were far more critical of the mayor than the article itself. Furthermore, many of the commentators used pseudonyms and fake names so they didn't have to identify themselves.

Then, on September 15, 2010, a little over a month from election day, the town council passed a resolution authorizing the town solicitor to "retain external legal counsel to take any and all actions to bring resolution to the matter of defamation of the mayor." What it basically meant was that a SLAPP would be commenced against the defendants and the town would pay for the legal fees, since the town's solicitor was retaining the external legal counsel to pursue the legal action.

Surely one can see how, as I mentioned earlier, this particular example gives us perhaps the clearest example of how a SLAPP gets its name. It's pretty hard to find a more clear-cut case of an individual's right to participate in the public process being violated than when an elected politician sues someone for criticizing them in their elected role. Why, Speaker, dare I say just about every member in this chamber would be embroiled in a SLAPP with one another if this is how we operated here.

I shouldn't kid, but you get my point. It is preposterous to think that a politician who is elected by the people is so above criticism that their detractors should dare not speak against them lest they risk being sued. That, Speaker, is a SLAPP.

Anyway, on October 8, 2010, now a little over two weeks before the election, the mayor proceeded with the lawsuit.

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Similar to the last SLAPP example I gave, where I pointed to a lack of legal follow-through on the part of the claimant as further proof that his claim was indeed a SLAPP, here again we see a disregard for typical legal procedure. Bear with me here, Speaker, because this may be a little technical, but it's definitely an important point to make. I'll try to get through it relatively quickly, but I certainly hope my point is not lost to the viewers.

Remember, this legal action was commenced by the mayor a little over two weeks from election day.

Typically, most legal actions of this nature are initiated by having what is known as a statement of claim issued. In this case, however, the action was initiated by having a notice of action issued under what is known as sub-rule 14.03(2)—I'm sure the legal minds in the chamber are loving this.

"What does this matter?" you may be asking. Well, here's why. Because the sub-rule 14.03(2) states the following: "Where there is insufficient time to prepare a statement of claim, an action may be commenced by the issuing of a notice of action ... that contains a short statement of the nature of the claim."

The question is, why was there insufficient time for the mayor to initiate the legal proceedings properly? The answer, I think, is obvious: Because the only timeline of relevance was the impending election, which was now, as I said, under three weeks away.

The mayor sued the two defendants, as well as five others, and claimed \$6 million in damages from all of the defendants. Two defendants were served with the notice of action on the same day the action was commenced, October 8, whereas one of the original two defendants was served with the notice of action on Thanksgiving Sunday, October 10, 2010, while he was having Thanksgiving dinner with his family.

Here's the catch. Remember sub-rule 14.03(2) that I just mentioned? Well, there is an accompanying rule, sub-rule 14.03(4), which very clearly states: "The notice of action shall not be served separately from the statement of claim." So serving defendants with the notice of action, but no statement of claim, directly contravened the rules.

My point of getting down into the weeds with this is not to bore you or my colleagues, I promise. No, the reason I bring this up is because it demonstrates quite clearly that in this case, the mayor was far less concerned with taking the appropriate legal action properly and, instead, far more concerned with simply proceeding in any way possible, as long as it was before the election.

It should come as no surprise, then, that one of the defendants swore in an affidavit that the mayor commenced the legal action in order to silence him days before the October 25, 2010, election. Moreover, the mayor did not file an affidavit in response to a motion by the defendants to have their legal costs recovered, nor did the mayor give any evidence that her motive was not to silence her critics as election day quickly approached.

The defendants in this instance outright alleged that this was a SLAPP. Furthermore, the defendants argued that because this was a SLAPP, they were entitled to an elevated award of costs.

The master presiding over a motion by the defendants to have the mayor pay for their legal costs ultimately sided with the defendants resoundingly. The master found that the evidence was indisputable. The master was convinced that the mayor brought the lawsuit forward in her capacity as mayor of the corporation and the town.

Moreover, because the mayor had access to the town's municipal money until December 14, 2010, the taxpayers, in effect, funded this SLAPP litigation.

This is a totally clear case of a SLAPP being used to silence and intimidate those of a different view. Because the party initiating the legal action is a politician, it becomes a SLAPP even more clearly, since they have a large vested interest in silencing their opponents.

Even more shocking in this case is the fact that, technically, this legal action was commenced without complying with the prior-notice provisions of the Libel and Slander Act respecting broadcasts.

The mayor expressly sought damages of \$6 million from the defendants, but the presiding master took issue with this, pointing out that, "In an action for damages, it is unusual for the plaintiff to claim a specific amount of damages in the notice of action."

As you can see, Speaker, it's difficult to not see this case from the beginning as nothing more than a desperate and ill-advised scheme to silence the mayor's political opponents in the leadup to and including the municipal campaign.

Perhaps more tellingly, the master concluded that the legal action initiated by the mayor was indeed SLAPP litigation. Ultimately, this SLAPP was put to rest when the mayor dropped the case and delivered a notice of discontinuance on October 17, 2011, over a year from when it was first initiated. Really, what good did it serve at all? Here was this SLAPP sucking precious court resources and time, dragging on for over a year, when it had absolutely zero credibility.

As I mentioned earlier, the second example I have given is a clear case of an elected or public official using a SLAPP against an individual in their community. Clearly, the mayor was only interested in silencing her critics prior to the election, and she resorted to outrageous measures to do so.

I have now spoken about an example of a private individual pursuing a SLAPP against another and a public, elected figure pursuing a SLAPP against a private individual, both of whom were trying to silence their critics. I do understand the need for Bill 52 because, as we've seen by the examples I've listed, these can take many months, or even years, to resolve. By instituting a timeline to decide if a matter is a SLAPP, Bill 52 will go a long way to ensuring these frivolous claims are taken care of.

Now, we've gone over two SLAPP examples: one a private individual pursuing a SLAPP against another private individual, and one a public, elected official pursuing a SLAPP against critics. I think the second one is actually more egregious.

We, as politicians, as public figures, basically sign on to agree to a public review of our job, quite frankly. We do that municipally, we do that provincially, and we do that federally. For an elected member who is serving in public service to suggest that they can use town resources or take it to a different level, provincial resources—imagine the outrage we would have if the various ministers who were chastised in this Auditor General report actually attempted to sue the Auditor General. There would be, I hope, riots on the street. People would be so offended that our elected officials, our appointed cabinet ministers, can't take the heat and, instead, want to silence their opposition and their opponents.

There would be no stomach in Ontario for that kind of action, so by putting in place Bill 52, we are attempting to say, "You, as an elected official, cannot use your staff

resources, your municipally funded resources—or provincially or federally—to in effect silence your opposition.” This, in a very specific way, demonstrates that a SLAPP is not always a big development company trying to silence individuals. This is an often-held stereotype that is simply not true, as I’ve demonstrated here today with my examples.

Yes, there are instances where the situation follows that narrative. There are also other vastly different contexts for SLAPPs as well. My point here is that a SLAPP is something that could be pursued by a variety of individuals for a variety of reasons, all of which have to do with silencing someone’s public views. That’s important to bear in mind when considering Bill 52 because it becomes particularly relevant to institute a mechanism for addressing potential SLAPPs, and that’s something that Bill 52 does.

That is why Bill 52’s proposal to institute a 60-day time limit on deciding whether or not a lawsuit is a SLAPP is a critical component of this legislation, but that’s not the only good proposal in Bill 52, and I’d like to take some time now to go over the bill itself.

Now that we’ve had some chance to review some common examples of SLAPPs, I think the viewers at home, and my colleagues here in the chamber, will perhaps have a better understanding of how Bill 52 could help remedy the problem that SLAPPs pose.

Bill 52, the Protection of Public Participation Act, 2014, sets out to combat SLAPPs by amending multiple pieces of legislation to basically create a process to determine if a lawsuit is a SLAPP and to have it dismissed accordingly, if so. In order to set up this process, Bill 52 amends the Courts of Justice Act to allow for fast-tracking of motions to determine whether legal actions are in fact SLAPPs.

Essentially, how Bill 52 will work, if enacted, is that if a defendant believes they have been targeted by a SLAPP, they will be able to bring forward a motion to have the presiding judge determine if in fact the legal action is a SLAPP. If the judge determines the action to be a SLAPP, then the judge shall dismiss the legal action within that 60-day time period. It remains incumbent on the defendant, however, to prove that the legal action brought against them in fact is a SLAPP. If they are unsuccessful in proving this to the judge, then their motion will be dismissed and the case would proceed. It’s also important to note that when rendering a decision on this motion, the judge would be able to award compensation regarding costs on the motion, if they deem it appropriate. Moreover, the judge would also be able to award the defendant damages, as the judge considered appropriate, if the judge determined that the claimant brought an initial legal action forward in bad faith.

A key component of Bill 52 is the 60-day timeline on the motion for determining if a legal action is a SLAPP. This timeline is essential for ensuring that SLAPPs do not bog down our already overburdened court system. If I have a concern with Bill 52, this is it: I don’t want to be in a place where we are expediting one legal proceeding

and then in two years finding out that we’ve actually made it worse for another legal proceeding; I’ll pick on sexual assaults. I don’t want this to be a case where the courts end up, by law, having to deal with one group of issues and then have another group have a longer waiting list.

By instituting a 60-day timeline for a decision, Bill 52 ensures that vexatious and unwarranted SLAPP suits are dismissed in quick order. That’s a central premise of Bill 52, I would suggest, and an important one.

Another reason why the 60-day timeline on the hearing of the motion proposed under Bill 52 is so critical is due to the tribunal connection Bill 52 establishes. I’ll confess, Speaker, that this is one section of the bill that does make me somewhat uneasy. Bill 52 establishes that if a claimant has proceedings before a tribunal—and I’ll pick on the OMB—then the defendant moving the motion to dismiss the legal proceedings can provide written notice to the respective tribunal informing them of the filed motion. At that point, the claimant’s proceedings at the tribunal are deemed to be stayed until the motion is dealt with. My reservations come from the thought that this measure could potentially lead to backups at multiple tribunals. In theory, you could have multiple instances of these motions being filed and, thus, multiple proceedings being stayed at other tribunals. Again, though, that is why the 60-day timeline is critical: because we must be mindful that balance is the key to situations like this. If there was no 60-day limit, then a claimant’s tribunal proceedings could all be stayed indefinitely while the motion proceeds only to, in the end, be vindicated if the motion was defeated. That wouldn’t be right, however, so having the 60-day timeline ensures that these motions are dealt with.

Bill 52 amends two other pieces of legislation: the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. The Statutory Powers Procedure Act is amended to provide that submissions for cost shall be made in writing. The Libel and Slander Act amendment, however, is somewhat more significant.

I don’t know if you want me to pause there, Speaker. I’ll defer to you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I’d like to introduce today a number of guests I have from my riding of Samia–Lambton. Representing the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario: Tom Lacey from Nova Chemicals; Chris Ciccarelli with Saint-Gobain; Kevin Vance, Shell Oil Products; David Meade from Praxair; and Mike Peters from Air Products Canada. They’ve asked me to remind everyone to come to the reception this evening. They’re in the west members’ gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you—and women's issues. Speaker, I'd like to welcome a delegation from the Provincial Council of Women of Ontario, specifically Mary Potter, their president.

This is an organization with a long history in Ontario. It's my pleasure to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I also wish to introduce representatives here from AMPCO: Susan Olynyk, ArcelorMittal Dofasco; Michael Peters, Air Products; Cameron Moffat, Westcast, Brantford headquarters; and Andy Mahut, US Steel Canada.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the House two old friends of mine from my undergraduate days at Concordia University in Montreal. I'd like members to join me in welcoming Mr. George Chiarucci and Mr. John Discenza, who are in the members' east gallery. Enjoy the show, boys.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure today to introduce Adam White of the Association of Major Power Consumers in Ontario. Adam and a number of AMPCO supporters are here today, many of whom are in the west gallery.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As Minister of Energy, I'm also pleased to acknowledge the large power consumers in the province of Ontario and welcome them to Queen's Park.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's a pleasure to welcome to the Legislature today Ron and Rhonda Stevenson. They're the parents of my amazing legislative assistant, Victoria Stevenson. Welcome.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to introduce to the House the family of today's page captain, Steven. They are his mother, Angie Kottaras; his father, George Kottaras; his sister Helen; and his grandparents Helen and Sam Sutter. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Mario Sergio: From the riding of York West, I have the pleasure to introduce my page, Jenny Doan. I want to thank her for the service that she has provided to the House. She's right here. Jenny, thank you so much. I hope your experience will serve you well here at Queen's Park.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I have three special guests from my riding. I'd like to introduce Pastor Mike Hollen, Pastor Dr. Al Stone and Tom Johnston, who have joined us today. We had our private bill passed today and I thought it was a great day. Welcome, gentlemen. Thank you for coming to Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to welcome today Paul Kossta to the House. He's a regular visitor here and I just wanted to say hello. He's from OSSTF.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a few visitors in attendance here today. I would like to recognize and welcome Kris Sousa to Queen's Park, who's sitting in the east members' gallery. If you can stand up, Kris. Kris is a university student who is very involved in the Davenport community, having been a camp counsellor for the Dovercourt Boys and Girls Club and also the chair of the

Youth Community Police Liaison Committee for 14 Divisions of the Toronto Police Service.

I'd also like to welcome to the Legislature the Regal Road Junior Public School choir, led by Ms. Abbey-Colborne. They will be performing on the grand staircase at 12:15. I'm really looking forward to their performance and encourage everyone in the House today to also partake in that.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome a group of students from Thornlea Secondary School in Thornhill this morning: Shahzad Bharda, Yuho Kim, Tiffany Chan, Christopher Poulos, Kelvin Zeng, Alexander Dober, John Lee, and Stephen Fish, all up in the east public gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I just want to welcome some special guests today: Elaine Campbell, president and CEO of AstraZeneca; Brian Maloney, director of government affairs; Jon Feairs, Ontario government affairs; and Eni Rukaj. All four of them are from AstraZeneca.

I had the pleasure this morning of speaking at an announcement where AstraZeneca donated a million-dollar gift to the Banting and Best Diabetes Centre at the University of Toronto, for diabetes research. On behalf of our government, I want to thank you for this generous gift. Welcome.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd also like to recognize Cameron Moffat, the energy manager at Westcast Industries, and also the grandparents of Nicole Eaton, who is our page here today—her grandparents, Allan and Pat Lee.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Our page from Thunder Bay—Superior North, Albany Sutherland, is the page captain today. In the public gallery, we have her step-grandmother, Alanna Downey-Baxter, and I believe her mother, Denise Baxter, is here. If we could welcome them, I'd be grateful.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Today, we have a guest in the members' gallery. I'd like the whole assembly to welcome Jeffrey Kroeker here, a wonderful fellow who is back in Queen's Park and watching today's events.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce the son of one of my colleagues, a person I was first elected with in 2006, when he was just a little boy. Now he's a major campaign contributor for his mother: Galen Flaherty.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm pleased to welcome Thornlea Secondary students who are here today. Thornlea Secondary School is on Yonge Street in my riding, and I'm glad they braved the gridlock to make it down here on time for question period. Shahzad Bharda, Yuho Kim, Tiffany Chan, Christopher Poulos, Kelvin Zeng, Alexander Dober, John Lee and Stephen Fish: Welcome.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce Mr. Jeffrey Kroeker, who is the former assistant for the House leader of the official opposition. He's in the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? Last call for introductions. Thank you very much.

It is now time for question period.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order on overdue order paper questions. On October 21, I made several inquiries to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, including questions on relief funding for the ice storm in December 2013 and the Ontario Disaster Relief Assistance Program. Mr. Speaker, I have not received a response to any of these questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would appreciate an opportunity to make my ruling.

That is a point of order, and I would defer to the government House leader that I understand it is overdue, and what steps would be taken to have those answers replied to. Thank you.

Further, the member from Perth-Wellington, on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, the clock is running. There are no points of order during question period.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, I'd like to bring to the minister's attention an overdue question that hasn't been answered. It's to the Minister of Transportation. Would he please clarify the government's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the House. I was under the impression that the person who was standing was starting question period, because I did invite the first question. Because of such, that they were points of order, I'm going to ask that the clock be reset, and I'll deal with the points of order.

The member from Perth-Wellington—quickly, please.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I would like to bring this to the attention of the Ministry of Transportation. The question was—it's an overdue question—would the Minister of Transportation please clarify the government's policy on extending GO's transit service to Stratford, confirming or denying the Premier's intention to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. I will also make this: If there are any further, I will deal with them after question period, because the time is allotted for question period during this particular time frame. I will defer to the House leader again, that if this is an unanswered question, if it's past time, it will be dealt with as quickly and expeditiously as possible.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will get that. Thank you.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday's Auditor General's report revealed that the incompetence of your Liberal government has reached

new heights: \$2 billion wasted on so-called smart meters, project costs nearly double the original estimate, and hard-working Ontarians left to pay the bill. A debt ballooning to \$325 billion will mean a burden of \$23,000 for every child born in 2018.

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There's one word that keeps coming up over and over again in this report, Premier, and that's "failure": a failure to manage money, a failure to manage projects, a failure to manage people, a failure to take care of our most vulnerable and a complete failure of leadership.

Premier, when will you stop failing Ontarians and get your fiscal house in order?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, as I said in the House yesterday and as I said this morning, we welcome the scrutiny of the Auditor General, as governments before us have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Hon. David Zimmer: Listen to the answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will come to order.

Now, I anticipate—I shouldn't, but I anticipate—that this will be emotional, and if it gets too emotional, I'm going to shut it down, and that includes anyone making any comments at all. Let's get through this properly.

Premier, please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we welcome the scrutiny of the Auditor General. We welcome the opportunity to improve services, and in fact Bill 8, which passed yesterday, actually increases the accountability of the government. We have worked with the Auditor General, and we will continue to work with the Auditor General.

Many of the recommendations that the Auditor General made, many of the areas of concern, are areas where we have already taken action, whether it's child care, the review of the immunization system, adult community corrections and the Ontario Parole Board. Many of those are areas where we have already taken action.

On the other areas of concern, we will continue to work with the Auditor General.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, the disrespect for taxpayers' dollars from this government is nothing short of appalling.

Premier, we thought we had seen it all when we saw a billion dollars lost in the gas plant scandal. Now we learn that you and your reappointed energy minister have doubled down by wasting \$2 billion more on smart meters that don't work. The \$2 billion in costs have raised energy prices on families and seniors who now can't even afford to turn on a space heater. There's nothing smart about wasting \$2 billion and getting no results.

Is anyone in your government willing to stand up and be held accountable for this abject failure of management and leadership?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said, and I will continue to say, that there are many areas—and the majority of the recommendations the Auditor General has made are things that we agree with, and we are completely aligned and will work with her, or we have already started to work to make those improvements.

But there are a couple of areas—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin—Caledon, come to order. The member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, come to order. Your names are on a list.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are a couple of areas where there is a disagreement, and I will address the issue of smart meters. If the member opposite had the opportunity yesterday to hear the head of Toronto Hydro speak, she will recognize that there is concrete success that we can see on the ground: 3% of Toronto hydro has been shifted off peak to save the equivalent of the power to fuel 97 condominium buildings. That's a serious reduction—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Christine Elliott: Premier, you can't get away from this smart meter fiasco, billions wasted on scandal, billions in forgone tax revenues from jobs you have driven out of this province, not to mention the \$11 billion we spend servicing our debt. All of that could be redirected to schools, to hospitals, to those with disabilities, to paying down our debt, but instead, all that money goes to pay for your scandals and ineptitude.

Premier, these scandals have to stop. Will you show Ontarians the respect they deserve and demand your energy minister resign today?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order. The member from Huron—Bruce, come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Just to the issue of smart meters, let me relay to the member opposite what some of the people who are experts in the field have said about them. The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario said that they are absolutely necessary for the proper functioning and future functioning of the distribution system for electricity. Smart grid technologies have the potential to improve reliability, reduce system costs, empower customers and lower the environmental impact of the electricity that we use.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is, because of the smart meters that are in place, we have data that we would not have otherwise. We are able to implement conservation mechanisms that we would not be able to implement without smart meters.

I know the member opposite is not particularly interested in conservation, but the fact is that we are. That's why smart meters are in place—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock, please.

New question.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Christine Elliott: Again to the Premier: Yesterday, I watched the Minister of Energy try to defend the indefensible. Rather than accept the Auditor General's indictment of his tenure as Minister of Energy, we watched the minister attack an independent and impartial officer of our Legislature. He accused her of getting her facts wrong and being in over her head. His disrespect showed just how out of touch with reality this minister is.

Premier, yesterday you said—and you said it again today—that your government welcomes accountability. Will you live up to those words and show your energy minister the door?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What the member opposite saw yesterday was a couple of ministers of this government making sure that people understand where we are aligned with the Auditor General and where there are some differences.

I think if the member opposite looks back to 2002 and some comments by a former minister of her party, she will see that there are times when ministers and governments disagree with some of the recommendations and some of the concerns of the Auditor General. That is not an unheard-of circumstance.

What the member opposite also should have heard is experts in the electricity field making it clear what smart meters are doing: how they are helping us gather data that will allow us to conserve, and how they are already allowing us to gather data on residential usage, on commercial usage, that will allow us to conserve into the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Christine Elliott: You know what, Mr. Speaker? The saddest part of the AG's report is the devastating human cost attached to this government's reckless management. From patients to pensioners, to families with children, to businesses and job creators, to our most vulnerable citizens who need our help—all have been failed by this government on so many fronts.

Premier, it's about priorities. You don't spend \$2 billion on not-so-smart meters when people nearing the end of their lives can't get the hospice and palliative care services they deserve. You don't spend \$2 billion on a program that doesn't work when developmentally challenged adults are in crisis and are waiting years for residential placements.

Premier, when will your government address the massive human cost attached to your government's incompetence?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There's a massive human cost to us not conserving energy. There's a massive human cost to not having access to information.

Yesterday, Anthony Haines, the head of Toronto Hydro—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yesterday, Anthony Haines, the head of Toronto Hydro, commented that during the ice storm last year, Toronto Hydro was able to identify people who were medically fragile, who were at risk. Because they had smart meters, they were able to identify where those people were and whether they had power, and move to address those concerns. So smart meters are helping us to gather data that is extremely necessary.

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On the general issue of the Auditor General, we have worked closely with her and we will continue to work closely with her. There are many, many areas of agreement where we have already started to implement the changes she recommends, Mr. Speaker, or we will do that. There are a few areas where there are discrepancies and we will continue to work with that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Christine Elliott: Obviously, you can tell by these responses that things have to change.

Yesterday's report showed a complete policy failure, a failure to respect Ontario taxpayers and a failure to take care of our most vulnerable citizens. The callous response from the energy minister cannot stand. Premier, signal to Ontarians that you truly believe in accountability, that you believe in priorities, that you recognize the human cost of your policies, and fire your energy minister.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Start the clock.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I reject the premise of the comment and the question, Mr. Speaker. We are working extremely hard to make sure that we do exactly that: to take the actions that we know are in the best interests of the people of this province.

As I have said, it is not unprecedented that there would be some small area of disagreement between the government and the Auditor General. I'm fairly certain that in 2002 Minister Bob Runciman did not lose his job, and Minister Bob Runciman, at that point, said that the auditor's report was misleading and inaccurate. That's what the minister said in 2002.

The reality is, it is extremely important that when there is a disagreement or when there is alignment or agreement, we are clear about that and we're clear about what our actions are to make sure that we conserve energy, that we gather information about immunization, that we make sure child care is safe. All of those are the work that we're doing right now.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Minister of Energy attacked the independent Auditor General of Ontario. Frankly, Speaker, I have never seen anything like this since I was elected to this Legislature. The minister said, "The electricity system is very complex; it's very difficult to understand." And he said that the auditor, "didn't understand" the issues. Speaker, not only is that patronizing, but that is sexist. The Premier and her minister should know that Bonnie—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The deputy House leader will come to order. The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order. The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will come to order. That's two for the deputy House leader and two for the member from Nepean—Carleton—sorry, one. I have a list; I checked.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you're not.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier and her minister should know that Bonnie Lysyk spent 10 years at Manitoba Hydro.

Will this Premier do the right thing and fire her Minister of Energy for his shameful behaviour towards an independent officer of this Legislature?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me just say that the Auditor General of Ontario is a professional. She is perfectly capable of engaging with the government on any of the issues that she has an opinion on. The Minister of Energy and his ministry have worked closely with the Auditor General. We have a great respect for her, for the office and for the work she has done. The vast majority of the recommendations and the concerns she has raised, we are aligned with, we are working on or we were already working on before she wrote her report.

The fact is that it is not unprecedented for there to be some narrow area of disagreement in terms of the report of the Auditor General. The fact is that the numbers and the commentary about smart meters in the report were not signed off on by energy officials in the ministry. We will continue to work with the Auditor General until we get those final reports.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Smart meters have not brought down consumption, and instead of going down, bills are just going up. The minister wasted \$1.9 billion on smart meters that are not smart, but instead of taking responsibility, he shoots the messenger by attacking the auditor.

The Liberals need to start taking responsibility for their incompetence. Will the Premier tell her incompetent

minister that his job is over and fire that Minister of Energy?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy is very eager to speak to some of the specifics in the supplementary, but let me just address the issue of what smart meters have done or have not done.

Anthony Haines, who's the president and CEO of Toronto Hydro, said this after the press conference that the AG did yesterday: "We've seen about a 3% shift off the peak here in the city of Toronto; 3% is 97 condominium buildings—97 condominiums buildings that came on the grid over the same period of time. We didn't have to make any additional capital investment because that shift of that 3% provided the capacity within our grid. I often get asked the question, 'My goodness, with all these condominiums going up, your grid must be absolutely stretched beyond belief.' But, in fact, the time-of-use program has allowed for that capacity to be there."

Mr. Speaker, the smart meters have allowed for that. They have allowed for that degree of conservation, and that is happening all over the province. They are working.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals wasted \$2 billion on smart meters, but instead of taking any responsibility, the minister just denied the facts put forward by the Auditor General. And the Premier is just doing it again.

The Auditor General is an independent officer. It is her job to give Ontarians the straight facts, without politics. But instead of listening to the auditor, the Minister of Energy attacked her competence and Liberal ministers have been taking to Twitter to support that disgraceful attack.

Speaker, I was astounded by the Premier's press conference this morning, where she actually defended his behaviour as well. How can this Premier, the first elected woman Premier of this province, not only support but pile onto this minister's arrogant and sexist behaviour?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, one of the quotes from the auditor's report states that "the benefits of smart metering have not been achieved...." I have some third-party validation for the fact that they have been achieved.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario stated that smart meters are "a shrewd investment that will benefit both individual consumers of power and society as a whole," and "They are necessary—absolutely necessary for the proper functioning and future functioning of the distribution system for electricity."

Brian Bentz, CEO of PowerStream, representing Aurora, Barrie, Markham and Vaughan: "Ontario is seen as a world leader in smart meter implementation."

Don McCabe, vice-president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture: "With the new time-of-use"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order—second time.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—"all customers will pay closer to the actual cost for the power they use.... Advantages"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

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ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. For years, the Liberals have insisted that smart meters would reduce consumption, save people money and cost about a billion dollars. None of this is true, none of it. They haven't reduced consumption, people are paying more, and the Liberals spent \$2 billion, not \$1 billion, on smart meters. This incompetence is obvious. It is incompetence, plain and simple, no matter how you cut it. Ontarians expect and deserve much better.

If the Premier won't fire her minister for incompetence, will she at least fire him for his arrogance?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Energy.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me just—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me; it was the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, this is her new question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Fine. Sorry.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me just go to the substance of the question around the smart meters because, as I have said, the smart meters actually are having the effect that we were looking for, and that is they are reducing consumption. Otherwise, the head of Toronto Hydro wouldn't be talking about 3% of power moving off grid. He wouldn't be talking about the capacity having been increased in the city of Toronto because of smart meters.

The fact is that independent, impartial officers of the Legislature actually disagree. We've got the Environmental Commissioner supporting and saying that the smart meters are a very important aspect of the system, and we've got the Auditor General who has a different opinion. So there is a disagreement; we understand that.

We will continue to work with the Auditor General, and we will make it very clear what the costs actually are, because so far, estimates have only been—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock.

Just before you start, I want to remind the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that he was warned. I may have been hasty with that, but if he decides to say another thing, he will be named.

Carry on.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There is nothing smart about smart meters. They went 100% over budget. They haven't brought down bills. In fact, the auditor says rate-payers are paying significantly more, and off-peak prices are up more than 100%. Smart meters haven't saved energy. In fact, the auditor says reductions "have not yet been achieved."

Smart meters simply are not doing their job, but in spite of that, the minister still has his job. Why won't the Premier give her Minister of Energy his walking papers and do right by the people of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In 2013, the Ontario Energy Board commissioned a study by the expert energy—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —that showed commodity costs per customer are estimated to be approximately \$12 per year lower because of load shifting and conservation driven by smart-meter-enabled time-of-use pricing. Over three years, that represents approximately \$150 million in savings which have not been accounted for by the Auditor General. What's more, an estimated 3.3% reduction—the same number used by Mr. Haines, from Toronto Hydro—in residential summer consumption was attributed to smart meter policies.

Smart meters represent an ongoing platform for which new applications are being added almost on a monthly basis. One of the expanding uses of smart meters is a wide range of already-in-service conservation and demand-management initiatives which are enabled by smart meters, suppressing the costs of electricity—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Since the Liberals were elected, they have staggered—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order—second time.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —from one energy boondoggle to another. Hydro bills have gone up by more than 300%. They cancelled two gas plants and wasted \$1.1 billion. They overspent on their smart meter program by \$1 billion.

The Liberal track record, frankly, is absolutely abysmal in the energy file. But no Liberal ever pays the price, Speaker. Will the Premier hold someone responsible—finally, for once—and fire her Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, that leader of the opposition has voted for every price mitigation measure that was brought before this House, including in the budget that was brought forward first in May, then the

actual budget, wherein we're removing the debt retirement charge—a legacy tax from the Harris government—two years earlier than planned, saving the average family \$70 per year in hydro bills.

The Ontario Energy Board is working on an OESP, an Ontario Electricity Support Program, which is in our budget and which will save them an additional \$180 off their bills.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: That leader of the opposition third party voted against those provisions to mitigate rates for low- and modest-income people. Shame on her, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's disgusting, shameful, ignorant. You are an ignorant man.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay will come to order, and the leader of the third party will withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Withdraw, Speaker, and I think the minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm here. Please stand and withdraw only.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is also to the Premier. This has to be the morning after the worst day in the history of your government. I say this because yesterday was the worst and most scathing Auditor General's report I have seen in my four terms at Queen's Park.

The auditor confirmed that debt will cripple our government; smart meters have increased bills for seniors, small business owners and families; and procurement policies have hosed taxpayers.

But above all, since 2009, since you were the Minister of Education, this government has radically reduced inspections into licensed child care facilities in Ontario, putting 29,000 of Ontario's children at risk. There is no Harper or Harris to blame anymore. It's all with you.

Will you scrap Bill 10 and put more enforcement into the regulatory regime for our children in child care, or will you continue on this path of putting our children—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: In terms of the accusation that you're making, I think it's really important to understand that Bill 10 is actually what allows us to fix some of the problems.

However, with respect to the backlog and inspections—and we are doing the inspections—we have actually added inspectors and we've already cut the backlog in half. With the assistance of Bill 10, we'll actually be legally able to move to a risk-based inspection system.

We've also been able to introduce a dedicated team of enforcement officers who are dealing with complaints against the unlicensed home care sector, which means that there's an enforcement unit that is doing that work, again freeing up time for inspectors to deal with licensing issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That's not adequate at all. We all know what this really is: It's a move to universal child care.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, come to order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We already know that this government has failed in its four mandates in order to protect children in licensed child care settings.

Today, there shouldn't just be one minister who should be asked to resign or who should be fired. There are actually three: It's the Minister of Energy, the Minister of Economic Development, and now the Minister of Education for continued negligence under Bill 10.

We now know that both the Auditor General and the Ombudsman—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order. Minister of Government and Consumer Services, please come to order. The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, please come to order.

Please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier: This isn't just about education. It's about failure in energy, failure in public procurement, and it's about failure in education. This is a government that has gotten it wrong, and they need to have some accountability, and their bill that they passed through the House the other day isn't going to cut it.

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So I ask her again: Will you ensure that Bill 10 is repealed, and will you ensure our children's safety by having more inspectors in licensed child care settings and allowing those that are, right now, unlicensed to regulate themselves? Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the member from Trinity-Spadina, come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you. I'm not surprised that the member opposite wants Bill 10 repealed. They voted against it because they thought we should delete all the new enforcement methods that are in it. They wanted us to delete them.

We believe we actually should have Bill 10 and have the enforcement tools to ensure that all forms of child

care, be they licensed child care centres, licensed home care or unlicensed home care—we want them all to be safe.

Another thing that Bill 10 allows us to do is, it actually allows us to carry out another of the auditor's recommendations. We will be able, with Bill 10, to require a vulnerable sector criminal reference check which we have not been able to do previously. With Bill 10, we have greater capacity to make sure our children are safe, no matter what form of child care the parent chooses.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. Let's look at the front bench of the Liberal government. Ornge air ambulance wasted millions and put Ontarians at risk, but that minister got a promotion. MaRS is a boondoggle and the costs keep going up. Now, we see \$8 billion wasted on P3s that are nothing but sweetheart deals for Liberal friends, but that minister is still sitting on the front bench.

The Liberals wasted \$1.1 billion on gas plants and not a single Liberal lost their job. And \$2 billion has been wasted on smart meters that don't reduce consumption or bills. That's \$10 billion, Speaker. That's almost our entire deficit right there, but no one has taken responsibility and no one has paid the price.

Is this Premier so arrogant and irresponsible that she thinks her front bench can waste billions, fail Ontarians and never be held accountable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In terms of accountability, I have to say, I was very, very surprised because we're talking about accountability of government and scrutiny on government. I was very surprised to see the NDP not support—vote against—Bill 8, which actually increases scrutiny. This is a party that goes on and on about the need to expand the scrutiny on government, so I would have thought they would have voted for Bill 8.

On the issues of building transit and transportation infrastructure, which is one of the things the leader of the third party's talking about, and on the issue of conservation, which is what smart meters are part of, we are doing everything in our power to make sure we build the infrastructure that's needed. I was at the UP Express announcement today. That's a piece of infrastructure that has been built and has been possible because of our procurement policies.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Weak cheese Liberal legislation is exactly why this province is in the mess that it's in, and we're proud not to support that kind of nonsense.

Apparently, though, being a Liberal minister is just about the safest job in Ontario. The Liberals are cutting health care, but the minister just denies the facts. The Liberals are cutting schools, but the minister just denies the facts. The Liberals are not inspecting long-term care homes, but the minister just denies the facts. The Liberals wasted \$2 billion on smart meters that didn't do their job, but the minister just denies the facts. The Liberals wasted

\$8 billion on P3s that are just sweetheart deals for insiders, but the minister just denies the facts. The Liberals wasted over a billion dollars on gas plants and delayed the evidence and not a single Liberal faces a job loss.

Just how many chances does a Liberal minister get before the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. I would ask during the round of questions that the members from Trinity–Spadina and Barrie do not engage in a conversation with the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, which means the three of you have been warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You just don't believe what it looks like from here.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Not one of us on this side of the House denies the facts and denies the complexity of the issues that we're tackling. We do not deny that it is a challenge right now for Ontario that we have to build infrastructure—we have to build transit, transportation infrastructure, roads and bridges across the province—and that we need to do that in a way that allows the private sector to work with us, because government doesn't have the project-management capacity to do all of that building. So we are doing it in a way that allows those projects to get built, whether it's hospitals or schools or transit projects.

We don't deny the fact that there's complexity involved in gathering immunization information or implementing electronic health records.

All of those things are complex, and I actually would welcome an exchange of ideas across the floor that acknowledged that complexity and didn't—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

New question.

PORK INDUSTRY

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Minister, the pork industry is an important part of our diverse agricultural industry here in Ontario. Made up of family farms dedicated to producing safe, nutritious pork, this industry contributes over \$5.6 billion to the provincial economy.

My riding of Halton is home to a large agribusiness sector that is a key pillar of our local economy. Our farmers are responsible for providing residents, both inside and outside of the riding, with a wide variety of local, fresh and delicious food, and pork is a key product.

When it comes to local food, Ontario pork is definitely a fan favourite, with seven out of 10 consumers regularly buying pork in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please inform the House on how our government is helping the pork industry adapt to the challenges faced today while evolving to meet the pressing needs of tomorrow?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Halton for the question and for her commitment to the agriculture sector in the wonderful riding of Halton.

Our government's support for Ontario pork producers is clear. Since 2010, we've supported research and development on innovative insurance products for the province's hog sector; we increased the sector's ability to execute emergency responses; we've been expanding the Ontario Pork brand at retail and foodservice; we commenced industry-wide enhancements to biosecurity across the province, including a special intake under Growing Forward 2 to assist with PED's impact earlier this year, and to mitigate this disease as we head into the fall and winter, representing about \$9 million in funding.

My ministry has worked and will continue to work with our industry partners, ensuring the vitality of Ontario's pork industry.

In the spirit of the season, members should enjoy an Ontario ham with an Ontario turkey this Christmas season.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you to the minister for his answer.

Ontario's pork industry is resilient, having faced challenges like PED and Russian sanctions, and time and time again they come out strongly.

In addition, our government's swift response to PED has empowered producers and industry partners to carry out a dedicated and systematic approach to biosecurity that is unequalled across North America.

From small family farms to major operations, 2,500 pork-producing farms contribute over \$1 billion to Ontario's farm cash receipts, helping to build a strong, successful agri-food sector in Ontario.

Minister, last year, Premier Wynne issued the agri-food growth challenge and called on the sector to double its rate of growth and create 120,000 new jobs.

Considering my riding of Halton's vast agri-food industry, can the minister please inform the House on how our government is working with the pork industry to help it meet the Premier's challenge moving forward?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member for the supplementary.

It's a big goal, but every day I see farmers, including those in the pork industry, embracing that challenge.

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I can tell you that we're happy to support Ontario's pork branding and marketing to help meet that challenge. Just recently I announced that our government is providing Ontario pork with up to \$2 million to help marketing efforts. These funds support a campaign that encourages more people to choose Ontario pork where they shop, whether it's at a butcher shop, a grocery store, restaurants or farmers' market. Ontarians are happy when they can

access delicious local food, and our farmers are happy when the demand for their product increases.

Working together with Ontario's pork producers, our government is strengthening Ontario's agri-food sector and ensuring that all Ontarians have access to excellent, locally produced food.

SMART METERS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, yesterday, when you were pressed by the reporters on why the public should accept your numbers while rejecting those of the Auditor General, you shamelessly said: "I'm not going to have a further debate on these details in public." Well, Minister, I've got news for you: When you blow a billion dollars, you're accountable to the public, and you'll be asked questions in public.

The Auditor General stands by her numbers. We the opposition, the press and the public stand by her numbers. We all know you blew \$1.9 billion on smart meters.

Will you rise in your place, retract your comments attacking the Auditor General and her report, and apologize for so egregiously mismanaging the smart meter program?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I didn't get quiet for you to carry on, and you are on very thin ice right now. It's an old trick but I was here before you.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I have a quote here. It says, "I'm telling you, [the smart meter program] was a deal changer." And "That smart meter program is the best thing we've done in the decade." That's from Anthony Haines, president and CEO of Toronto Hydro.

Again, Brian Bentz, CEO of PowerStream—Aurora, Barrie, Markham and Vaughan, all communities with PowerStream's responsibility: "Ontario is seen as a world leader in smart meter implementation. PowerStream continues to be a strong supporter and advocate of the provincial government's smart meter initiative and recognizes it as being a key component to further developing Ontario's conservation and demand management programs."

Smart meters have been instrumental in enabling us to move forward with our conservation programs that are saving businesses and families hundreds of millions of dollars a year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, your failure to take responsibility for the smart meter fiasco shows how complacent and arrogant your government has become. This smart meter disaster is another billion-dollar scandal. Your attacks on the AG are unprecedented. Your unwillingness to take responsibility right here and now proves that you've held power for too long.

Minister, will you do the ethical thing—take responsibility for your actions and your failures and this smart meter mess—do the honourable thing and tender your resignation?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I have a professional disagreement with the Auditor General—that's number one.

In terms of disagreeing with an Auditor General, the PCs say that disputing the Auditor General's findings is unprecedented and it's a resigning issue. They clearly don't remember former Public Safety and Security Minister Bob Runciman calling an Auditor General report "misleading and inaccurate." I would never use those terms, Mr. Speaker. We had a professional disagreement, and they should look at their own record before they start throwing stones.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's about the third time, so the member from Prince Edward—Hastings is warned. For those who don't remember: no more chances.

New question.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is for the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

Yesterday's Auditor General's report made clear that since 2005, the government has overpaid \$8 billion of hard-earned taxpayers' money on P3 infrastructure projects; \$6.5 billion of that wasted money came from the higher private sector borrowing costs that P3s incur.

Earlier today, the Premier toured one of those P3 projects, the spur line of the Union Pearson Express project. Financing for that project was provided by some of Canada's largest and most profitable banks. How does this government justify picking the pockets of the people of Ontario to fatten the profits of Canada's largest banks?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me begin by thanking the Auditor General for the recommendations that she did make with regard to Infrastructure Ontario. I have a letter from the board of Infrastructure Ontario that was submitted to me yesterday, saying that they will indeed look into and work with all of those recommendations.

What I can say, though, is that it's incorrect to suggest, as the member is suggesting, that \$8 billion has somehow been lost in these projects. The fact of the matter is, you can't point to a cost without also including the benefit. The benefit, Mr. Speaker—and it's in the report—is \$14 billion in savings as a result of costs that

have been shifted to the private sector, which means, when you analyze that with the costs, it's about \$6.6 billion in net savings to Ontarians as a result of the 74 AFP projects that we have presided over. That's the full story. That's what the member should be referring to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The minister can try to spin this all he wants, but the auditor made it clear there was no solid evidence for going the privatization route on these 74 projects. In fact, her predecessor said the same thing in 2012 about the Union Pearson Express spur line. He said very clearly that the numbers used to justify the P3 were basically made up.

The government didn't listen then; it refuses to listen now. The government has already wasted \$8 billion on public-private partnerships. How many more billions will the government waste before it listens to the advice of not one, but two Auditors General?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I know this member to be a sensible member of this Legislature, so it sort of surprises me when he would throw out a cost without also referring to the benefit. So I refer him to page 203 of the report, where it clearly outlines the differences between what he's saying and what the auditor has said.

The auditor's report indicates on page 203 that there are \$46.6 billion that have been spent under the traditional program. Under AFP, those costs are \$40 billion, which is a saving of \$6.6 billion. A saving is a saving. You've got to include the benefits when you talk about the costs. It's that simple.

SENIOR ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors' affairs. Recently, the minister, along with some of my colleagues, attended the Ontario Senior Achievement Awards right here at Queen's Park, honouring 20 outstanding seniors who, after the age of 65, have made significant contributions to their communities.

Seniors across Ontario have given a lifetime of service towards building this country, our province and their communities. They are part of a proud history of giving back and are lifelong contributors both in their working life and now as volunteers. I was humbled and inspired by the remarkable achievements of all the recipients.

Would the minister kindly please provide us with additional details regarding this wonderful event and program and how Ontario continues to recognize and celebrate our seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I thank the member from Burlington for the question, a good question, actually.

Celebrating our seniors is part of Ontario's commitment to build a successful, compassionate province where everyone has the opportunity to connect, contribute and enjoy a high quality of life. We have celebrated the extensive contributions of Ontario seniors for the past 28 years with the Ontario Senior Achievement Awards, and each year we are reminded of just how much they have done for us.

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Along with the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell, I had the pleasure of presenting 20 incredible seniors with this honour. For every hour and every act of dedication these seniors have made, our quality of life improves, our community spirit grows and our province is made stronger because of the extraordinary work that they do on our behalf.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'd like to thank the minister for his response. I'm delighted to inform this Legislature that an outstanding senior from my riding of Burlington, Mr. William K. Ferris, was celebrated at the ceremony.

Applause.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Indeed.

Mr. Ferris has volunteered with the Canadian Red Cross for more than 20 years. He has taken on various leadership roles and assisted with deployments to the Mississippi and Manitoba floods and northern Ontario wildfires, as well as Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Ike aftermaths in the United States. He's quite an exceptional person, as you can see. I was very humbled by the accomplishments of this incredible senior from my community and I was pleased to recently congratulate him on receiving this important award.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell us more about the recipients who received this wonderful honour?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I have to thank the member for Burlington for her very strong advocacy and representation on behalf of the seniors in her community.

Seniors over the age of 65 who qualify for this award have contributed in many different fields, including art, literature, community service, volunteerism, education, environment, fitness, humanitarian and others. These exemplary seniors have taught others how to overcome late-life depression. They have brought the gift of music to young and old alike. They have preserved beauty and nature in their communities for all to enjoy and so much more.

The awards they have received are symbolic of how much we respect, honour and admire them all. They represent the collective wisdom and compassion that have brightened the lives of many others and their accomplishments are an inspiration to us all. We will continue to do more for seniors, Speaker.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development. Minister, over the past few months, you've used bafflegab and gobbledygook in this House to deflect from your utter mismanagement and incompetence while taking taxpayers for a ride to MaRS.

Let's review your litany of malfeasance: You couldn't loan money to MaRS, so you changed the law. MaRS still couldn't lease the building to 80%, so you broke the law—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw. I would not advise him to say that other thing he just said. Withdraw, please.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

So you bended the law that you had just made. MaRS got the loan, but couldn't make the monthly payments, so you had another ministry make the interest payments for MaRS. Then you bailed out ARE to get back to square one.

Minister, why should anyone in this province have any trust in you to turn this mess around?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Litany of personal insults aside, I'm pleased to respond to this question. Again, I want to thank the auditor for her coverage of the MaRS issue in the Auditor General's report. She spent a great deal of time rolling out the narrative on this from the very beginning, right through to today. I think that's a valuable piece of work because what it does is indicate the challenges. It verifies that that building would have been left one more winter rotting in the ground, which would have created some great expense, and it indicates when and why the government had to step in to provide support to MaRS.

I'm looking forward later today to getting together with our expert panel in announcing a positive step forward. I hope that the member wants to join us in putting this project on to solid footing. I suspect he has alternative agendas.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, I was at your press conference. You did not welcome the Auditor General's report whatsoever.

But let's also look at your terrible list of decisions as cabinet minister. First, you cancelled a gas plant and wasted a billion dollars, and your colleague took the fall for that mistake. You were caught using franking stickers that you weren't legally allowed to, so you let your staff member resign in disgrace.

It's quite clear that you have an impeccable record of skirting your responsibility. And now you have the gall to question the Auditor General's numbers yesterday in a press conference, and that she got it wrong.

Minister, I know that MaRS stands for medical and research services, but I think it's more like to really mean the minister's annual repeated screw-ups. I'll be at the technical meeting today, and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm going to ask him to temper his language.

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I would never respond by attacking the member's integrity. His own party will do that for us, I suspect, because they tend to do that on a regular basis, and that's fine.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is I am looking forward to the announcement we will be making this afternoon. This project needs to be put on solid footing. We need to protect the taxpayer investment in this project. The announcement we're going to make later today will do just that.

We need to see this project be finished because that's going to create jobs, that's going to create economic growth, and that's going to help build a stronger innovation climate in the city of Toronto and the province of

Ontario. We're looking forward to making that announcement.

I don't expect to have the member's support on this. That member wanted this building to rot in the ground. We're going to build it up. We're going to create jobs. We're going to create economic development. Mr. Speaker, we're going to finish that project.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: To the Premier: Yesterday the Minister of Energy patronized the Auditor General by saying that the electricity system was too complicated for her to understand. It was patronizing; it was sexist. Today he said this about—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Please finish.

Ms. Catherine Fife:—and it was shocking yesterday. But today, he said this about the leader of our party: "I won't take lessons from that woman." You said that in this House this morning. You didn't say "the leader of the party." You didn't say "the member from Hamilton Centre." You said "that woman."

Will the Premier do the progressive thing and have her minister apologize for that kind of language in this House?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's talk about the substance of the issue, because I think what the party opposite is trying to do is to deflect from what we're really talking about.

We're actually not talking about gender, Mr. Speaker. We're actually talking about a competent and a respected officer of this Legislature who wrote a report that we have accepted. We understand that there are concerns that need to be addressed. We will continue to work with that professional officer of the Legislature.

But what we also will do is, we will point out where there are points of difference. What our Minister of Energy has done is, he has simply said we agree with much of what the Auditor General has said, but there are some points of disagreement, and we need to continue to work with her on those, so that the people of Ontario will know exactly what the programs we've put in place have accomplished.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Premier, you're missing an opportunity to address the very issue that this House is facing around sexist behaviour. You're missing it right now.

The Minister of Energy has attacked the auditor. He's on the record as doing so. Now he's using sexist, unparliamentary language to refer to our leader. I don't know what's going on in the minister's head, but he should be more respectful when things come out of his mouth.

Will the Premier fire her minister for his behaviour toward the auditor and toward the leader of this party, the member from Hamilton Centre? Do it right now.

Interjections.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I have five adult daughters. They come over and have dinner with me at my house frequently. They're very, very interested in public policy issues and discussions, and we get involved in some very animated debates. Sometimes they're fairly heated debates, but they're very respectful. I respect my daughters.

I respect the Auditor General. We had a professional disagreement. She came to my office. I met with her with my staff. We discussed some of the issues. We explained our position to her, and we agreed to disagree. That has nothing to do with the allegations that are being made on the other side.

When I'm dealing with people—with women, I see my daughters across the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Start the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. The member from Timmins—James Bay will come to order. The leader of the third party will come to order, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. The Minister of Labour will come to order. Thank you.

New question.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question is to our incredible Minister of Education. Student well-being is one of our key priorities. My daughter and tens of thousands of other young Ontarians are already benefitting from full-day kindergarten, but we know, as children grow older, physical activity does more than improve health and well-being. It also builds confidence, leadership, productivity and creativity.

Research and science also show that physical activity in school improves a student's concentration, attention span and mood, ensuring they're prepared to learn. Providing more opportunities for children and youth to stay healthy and succeed in school supports our government's economic plan for Ontario as well. That's why I was so pleased to hear about the 60 minutes of physical activity initiative that you and the Premier announced recently. Could you please elaborate on this announcement and how it will get more children active throughout the day?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Etobicoke—Lakeshore, and I wish his daughter well in school.

I was pleased to join the Premier and the Associate Minister of Health last week—it seems like ages ago now, but just last week—to announce a partnership with Active at School and the Ontario Physical and Health Education Association, which we refer to as Ophea, to get children more active each and every day. Active at School will be working with Ontario and Ophea to provide kids with the opportunity to participate in 60 minutes of physical activity for kids, connected to the school day in some way or another.

Meeting this goal of 60 minutes of physical activity a day is part of our government's renewed focus on student well-being, including healthy eating, physical activity, a supportive and safe school climate and mental health—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you, Minister, for your fulsome response. Student well-being is one of our key priorities. We know that when children and youth are physically active, they're healthier and better able to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

My five-year-old daughter is already fascinated by the lure of electronics and video games. My wife and I certainly don't want her and her friends just sitting on a couch playing games. We want her and her friends to be healthy and active. So our goal as parents, and I know your goal as minister, is to ensure that our children are getting at least an hour a day of physical activity by 2018. We're trying to give her that already now.

Minister, can you please explain how the partnership between Ophea and Active at School will help to meet our goal of 60 minutes of physical activity a day?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you so much. When I think about my grandchildren, they're really active. They spend a lot of time biking, skating and swimming. They're really active, but that isn't true of all kids. We want to make sure that all kids are getting the physical activity that they need to thrive.

So when we think about this initiative, there are a number of ways in which we can reach that 60 minutes. It might be through an organized sport. It might be through extracurricular activities. It might be through the gym class. It might be through activities in the regular curriculum. It could be in what we call active transportation and encouraging kids to walk or bike to school. There are so many ways, Speaker, that we can do an excellent job of getting our children more active than they are today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: Just wondering, in the spirit of transparency and accountability, if we could have unanimous consent for me to do my question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is seeking unanimous consent to ask his question. Do we agree? No.

MEMBERS' PHOTOS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I find this rather interesting announcement that I have to make. I'm going to remind everybody before we do the deferred vote not to run away because this is the opportunity that you've been presented with: A collective photograph of the entire House is immediately after the vote. Immediately after that, the women's parliamentary picture will be taken, as well.

We have a deferred vote—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think I've been pretty patient, but I'm getting heckled just to make an announcement. That's regrettable.

DEFERRED VOTES

SAFEGUARDING HEALTH CARE
INTEGRITY ACT, 2014LOI DE 2014 DE SAUVEGARDE
DE L'INTÉGRITÉ DES SOINS DE SANTÉ

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to safeguard health care integrity by enacting the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014 and by amending certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions / Projet de loi 21, Loi visant à sauvegarder l'intégrité des soins de santé par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur le don de sang volontaire et la modification de certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1147 to 1152.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members take your seats, please.

On December 9, Mr. Bradley moved third reading of Bill 21. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm
Anderson, Granville	Gravelle, Michael	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gretzky, Lisa	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Baker, Yvan	Hatfield, Percy	Naqvi, Yasir
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoggarth, Ann	Natyshak, Taras
Ballard, Chris	Horwath, Andrea	Nicholls, Rick
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
·Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Pettapiece, Randy
Bisson, Gilles	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Bradley, James J.	Jones, Sylvia	Qaadi, Shaffiq
Chan, Michael	Kiwala, Sophie	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Sandals, Liz
Clark, Steve	Leal, Jeff	Sattler, Peggy
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Scott, Laurie
Coteau, Michael	MacLaren, Jack	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	MacLeod, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet

Damerla, Dipika	Malhi, Harinder	Smith, Todd
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Mantha, Michael	Taylor, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	Martins, Cristina	Thompson, Lisa M.
Dickson, Joe	Martow, Gila	Vanhof, John
Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah	Vernile, Daiene
Duguid, Brad	Mauro, Bill	Walker, Bill
Elliott, Christine	McDonnell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Fife, Catherine	McGarry, Kathryn	Wong, Soo
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McMahon, Eleanor	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Forster, Cindy	McMeekin, Ted	Yakabuski, John
Fraser, John	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yurek, Jeff
French, Jennifer K.	Milczyn, Peter Z.	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 93; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1156 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We have a number of people in the gallery. As you know, a little bit later we'll be doing a tribute to a good friend and colleague who served in this Legislature for a long time, and I'd like to introduce a number of friends and a number of former colleagues. I'll do it in that order:

Bill Baulch, Sandra Bussin, Lisa Christensen, Russell Hahn, Carolyn Lemon, Bruce Logan, Trish Nember and Eleanor O'Connor.

I also would like to introduce—and I don't want to steal your thunder here—former Speaker of the Legislature David Warner, who is here with us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You are stealing my thunder, but carry on.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I am. Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm trying as best I can.

A former Treasurer of Ontario, Floyd Laughren, is here as well, in the members' west gallery; along with Frances Lankin, a former minister of the crown; along with our good friend Ruth Grier, a former minister of the crown. Apparently, Marilyn Churley is here somewhere. Wherever you are, Marilyn, we say hello. Thank you and welcome back.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do like it when we all get along.

Further introductions?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to introduce the Woodfield Road residents, who are sitting in the gallery. They are from an area of my riding, and I'm pleased to have them here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now, with a little less thunder, it is the habit of this particular Speaker and, I think, previous Speakers to introduce our former members.

In the members' west gallery, we have Floyd Laughren, from Nickel Belt in the 30th to the 36th Parliaments; Frances Lankin, from Beaches–Woodbine in the 35th and 36th Parliaments and from Beaches–East York in the 37th Parliament; and Ruth Grier, from Lakeshore in the 33rd Parliament and Etobicoke–Lakeshore in the 34th and 35th Parliaments. We welcome you to the west members' gallery.

In the Speaker's gallery is the former member from Scarborough–Eglinton in the 30th, 31st, 33rd and 35th Parliaments, and Speaker in the 35th Parliament, David Warner.

Welcome to all our former members. We're glad you're here.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With no insult to the member from Timmins–James Bay, that one's got more thunder than if you had let me have it. I just thought I'd let you know. Anyway, it's nice to be introduced twice.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last year's Christmas ice storm was an event that we will not soon forget. Our riding of Wellington–Halton Hills was among the hardest-hit areas. In the aftermath of the storm, the provincial government quickly committed to providing assistance to municipalities to help cover cleanup costs.

On February 18, I spoke in this House and urged the government to work with our municipal partners to ensure that they were properly compensated for legitimate ice storm costs. I also wrote directly to the previous minister several times in support of our local municipalities.

However, almost a year has now passed, and they are growing increasingly frustrated with a process that seems to keep changing on them and is much more complex and complicated than it perhaps needs to be.

The town of Halton Hills originally submitted a claim for \$1.8 million. The government then changed the guidelines on them, and they're now working toward a new unofficial deadline of year's end. The township of Puslinch had to compile 330 pages to support their claim of \$45,000. The township of Centre Wellington is working hard to complete a \$302,000 claim. The township of Guelph/Eramosa is also working to finish their submission before the deadline.

The Grand River Conservation Authority needs \$550,000. Conservation Halton is requesting \$129,000 and I found out today that the Hamilton Conservation Authority is also planning to submit a claim.

I trust our local partners, and I am confident that they would submit verifiable claims or I wouldn't be standing

in this House now and raising this issue. They should listen to my colleague the member for Oxford. Let's work together and get this done.

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY BRANCH

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I rise today to bring attention to the excellent work done by the Windsor-Essex branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. Since their first very meeting in 1971, the Windsor-Essex branch CMHA has evolved to become a vital local resource for people suffering from mental health challenges in Windsor and Essex county.

The Windsor-Essex branch offers client-focused, community-based programs, such as their homeless initiative program or their employment support program. These programs help keep people out of hospital, and assist them in becoming self-empowered and ultimately fully invested members of their local community.

In order to build on their mandate, the CMHA is looking to develop community training programs. These programs would allow mental health professionals to train other front-line workers—like firefighters, police officers, paramedics, nurses and correctional officers—to properly care for people suffering from mental illness in their various work environments. Professionals in my community want this training and the CMHA is willing to provide it, but they need financial assistance.

I hope all members of this chamber can agree to help find ways to provide assistance and support to the development of CMHA community training programs in Windsor West and in their own communities.

TORONTO FAIR TRADE SHOW

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Last week, I had the opportunity to attend the Toronto Fair Trade Show hosted in Davenport's very own Gladstone Hotel, an iconic institution for the arts known not just in my riding, but across the country and the world.

Organized by Rafik Riad, the fair trade show was the first of its kind in Canada, developing awareness of fair trade products and supporting producers and local artisans from over 25 developing countries.

The overarching theme of this fantastic event was to raise public awareness and consciousness that our individual consumer choices can raise the standard of living for countless people everywhere.

The show demonstrated the importance of ensuring the goods we purchase are produced in an ethical and sustainable way. Indeed, hundreds of Torontonians came to Davenport for the fair trade show to do just that.

There was tremendous energy in the room as participants roamed around the Gladstone Hotel learning about fair trade. Fifteen fantastic vendors were featured with a unique set of products from different artisans and producers around the world.

The company Social Gem sold jewellery produced by female artisans in Indonesia, whom they fund to assist with school fees.

As a matter of fact, the necklace I'm wearing right now is from the fair trade show. This necklace is made from rice-straw paper and was produced by deaf and mute women involved in El Nafeza, an Egyptian charity working in the field of craftsmanship and social development.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy that this wonderful event took place in my riding of Davenport, and I'm looking forward to next year's event.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to challenge the government to take responsibility for their gross fiscal mismanagement and the devastating economic and human costs associated.

Yesterday's report from the Auditor General again highlighted the failures of this Liberal government. The lack of value for money found in this audit is extremely disturbing: for instance, \$2 billion spent on smart meters, a decision that the AG points out was not supported by a cost-benefit analysis. Speaker, I ask, who does that? If you are running a business, you must take a look at your analysis in that regard. And they spent over \$1 billion beyond the original estimated cost.

There is also another problem: global adjustment. By next year the total cost will be \$50 billion over and above the market costs of electricity. We all know in Ontario we can't afford higher electricity costs, because we're paying subsidies out for energy that we no longer need. Global adjustment has significantly impacted time-of-use rates, now accounting for 70% of electricity costs.

This mismanagement of energy and the economy has created hardships for the people and businesses of my riding of Huron—Bruce and across this province. Even the manufacturing sector in my riding, which I have spoken with, told me they have been forced to send people home during operational hours as opposed to paying global adjustment, all because energy prices are too high.

Mr. Speaker, it's time for this government to start making smart economic decisions.

TRUCKING SAFETY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Today I rise to discuss the issue of aggregate and dump truck drivers. There's a serious issue that has been going on for over a decade, and this government has done nothing to address it. Whether it's dump truck drivers whose trucks are being overloaded because the loaders are putting too much weight into that truck and the drivers have no control over it, and the drivers end up getting the fines—this government has not addressed this problem.

1510

When it comes to aggregate drivers, aggregate drivers also don't have any control over where the loads are

placed, but when they pull into an MTO enforcement facility, the MTO then gives them fines and tickets for axle weight. They can't control which axle the loader puts the material onto.

To address the situation, the government needs to implement realistic policies—implement proper legislation that addresses the realities that these drivers face. This government has, time and time again, given makeshift solutions to this problem by providing exemptions that sometimes work and sometimes don't work. Drivers need to be treated with respect. This government can make the proper changes but is not committed to doing it.

Providing fake solutions, makeshift solutions is not the answer. The government needs to have a systemic overhaul of the system and ensure there's true fairness. At the end of the day, the loaders—the companies that load the trucks—need to be held responsible, not the drivers. I ask this government to do something. A decade of lack of action is simply unacceptable.

CHRISTKINDL MARKET

Ms. Daiene Vernile: You've heard me share with you and the members of this House how, in my riding of Kitchener Centre, we are the oldest and the largest German community in Canada. This past week, Kitchener city hall turned the clock back to celebrate an ancient Germanic tradition called the Christkindl Market. For four days, our city hall was transformed into a medieval marketplace, and 40,000 people showed up to celebrate this wonderful, unique experience over the course of the festival.

Many people these days are complaining that Christmas is too commercial, too fast and too flashy. If you feel that way, then you need to experience the Christkindl Market. There were booths and stalls full of traditional handmade Christmas ornaments, nutcrackers, wood-carved toys, hand-crafted jewellery, handmade knitted sweaters and scarves, and of course, we had lots of tasty German foods.

But wait, there's more. Choirs and dancers wandered through city hall over the course of the festival depicting various Christmas characters. They are traditional characters and they welcomed everyone.

For 18 years, this very festive market has shown us how Christmas was celebrated in a much simpler time. It showed us how in the city of Kitchener, once called Berlin, people marked the holiday season.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish everyone a very safe and happy holiday. Merry Christmas and, as the Germans say, frohe Weihnachten.

WINCHESTER DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr. Jim McDonell: In my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, we are blessed with many wonderful and caring people and organizations. One such organization is the Winchester District Memorial Hospital.

The hospital has gained a high level of confidence and support in our community due to its superior level of care. In fact, just last month, it once again was acknowledged with two awards: the first, a Quality Healthcare Workplace Award from the Ontario Hospital Association in recognition of its efforts made to improve the quality of work life as well as the quality of care delivered; and second, a Workplace Health Award from the Eastern Ontario Health Unit for exceeding expectations in encouraging employees to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle. I have come to expect such awards as they are a regular occurrence at this hospital, which is reflected in the community support received during its recent fundraising activities.

The riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry is geographically a very large riding, stretching over 100 kilometres from the Quebec border westerly to include Bainsville, Cornwall, Long Sault, Iroquois and Winchester. It is not unusual that people where I live in the far east of the riding tell me that they are travelling to Winchester over an hour away to receive health care at the hospital, driving by numerous other health care options. I believe that says it all.

Once again, congratulations to the staff and front-line workers at the Winchester District Memorial Hospital—a job well done.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Bob Delaney: Yesterday, my esteemed colleague from Halton had the pleasure of announcing new GO service on the Milton line for all of us who are served by GO Transit on Milton. Those seven stations serve commuters in Halton region—in particular, Milton—Lisgar, Meadowvale, Streetsville, Erin Mills, Cooksville and Dixie.

These are two badly needed new trains providing service on the Milton line, one which is going to connect in Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville somewhere just shortly before 9—between 8:40 and 9—which is going to enable people to be able to get down who don't need to spend a full day in Toronto and most valuably, one that's going to leave Union Station at 3:40. So if yours is a short day to spend in Toronto, you're now going to have an opportunity to take that GO train instead of taking your car downtown and paying the price to park downtown.

In the last 11 years, we have more than doubled capacity on the Milton line—gone from five trains to nine in January, with the new service taking effect on Monday, January 5. The trains have all expanded from 10 to 12 cars. We've expanded all of the platforms at the stations to accommodate 12 cars, especially at Streetsville—expanded parking; built a new parking lot on the north side; resurfaced the station; implemented the Presto card; and, of course, built the new Streetsville GO bus repair facility—all great news for people in Mississauga and Milton.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: In a country where all but our First Nations peoples are immigrants and where our diversity, ethnicity, colour and religion are not just tolerated but celebrated in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms, it is deeply troubling that there are some who seek to perpetuate the hatred and fear of another.

As you may be aware, Mr. Speaker, recently the Islamic Centre of Kingston was vandalized by persons as yet unknown. I stand here today to denounce these mindless acts unequivocally. This hateful criminal behaviour is reprehensible and has no place in our city or our society.

Kingston prides itself on its multicultural strength and its deep embrace of minorities. It's a community that cares. If my Muslim sisters and brothers are hurt, then I am hurt too. We are one, and I stand with our Muslim community.

The Islamic community in Kingston is in fact a shining example of inclusivity and kindness to others. They are bright, welcoming, respectful, inquisitive and a loving and generous people.

Fellow members, I urge you to stand up against racism in all forms, in words and in acts, no matter how small or large. Shukran. Toda. Thank you. Teşekkür ederim. Meegwetch.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before I turn to the Minister of Education, as was guessed by the member from Timmins–James Bay, we do have another visitor in the members' west gallery, and that's Marilyn Churley from Riverdale in the 35th and 36th Parliaments, Broadview–Greenwood in the 37th Parliament, and Toronto–Danforth in the 37th and 38th Parliaments. Marilyn Churley, welcome.

MARION BRYDEN

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll turn to the Minister of Education on a point of order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Marion Bryden, a former member of this Legislature for the then riding of Beaches–Woodbine from 1975 to 1990, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Education is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute. Do we agree? Agreed.

I will turn to the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome, guests and friends of Marion Bryden.

On behalf of the government caucus, I am honoured to have this opportunity to pay tribute to Marion Bryden, a very respected former member of this House who represented my riding of Beaches–East York, which was then known as Beaches–Woodbine. I'm particularly

pleased to be able to deliver these remarks in front of a previous member of my riding, Frances Lankin, and my previous member of provincial Parliament for Toronto–Danforth, Marilyn Churley. Welcome to both of you. You served this House well with distinction.

Marion Bryden served this Legislature for 15 years, making her one of the longest-serving women in the history of this Legislature. I'm sure that many of my colleagues in this room are familiar with Marion's exceptional work in politics, especially my colleagues from the third party. But if I may, I would like to provide a bit of background for those who are not as familiar.

Marion Bryden, a native of Winnipeg, was born in 1918 and passed away just two years ago. She received her post-secondary education at the University of Manitoba and was a scholarship student at the University of Toronto. Though coming from a Conservative family, Marion developed a growing interest in socialist and progressive ideas at the University of Toronto and became increasingly active in the Canadian Co-operative Federation.

After school, Marion joined the federal Department of Labour as a researcher, and this is where Marion met her future husband, Kenneth Bryden.

1520

As it turns out, her tremendous work in research at this time would become the launching pad for her very impressive career in politics. Her researching expertise is what thrust her into the history books as one of the greatest pioneers of the New Democratic Party.

In 1944, Ken moved to Saskatchewan to work for Tommy Douglas's new CCF party in government. Marion resigned her post in Ottawa to join her husband out west, stopping along the way at her family home in Winnipeg, where she and Ken were married.

Although this was a time where it was frowned upon for a married woman to be working in government, it wasn't long before Marion was hired by the CCF. The opposition and the media made a major issue of her employment, but to the credit of Tommy Douglas, he insisted that only the qualifications of an employee were relevant, and that Marion more than exceeded the requirements.

Marion was greatly affected by the treatment that she received in her bid for government work. It was outright wrong that gender should ever be a consideration in hiring processes for a government, and Marion would make sure that this attitude changed.

As we all know, Marion and her husband were key figures in forming the Ontario New Democratic Party in the early 1960s, but in 1949, Marion and Ken had moved back to Toronto, where she worked on analysis and budget issues for the following decades while she helped out with the Ontario branch of the CCF. During this period she also wrote several books on taxation.

In 1966, Marion joined Ken, who had been an MPP since 1959 at Queen's Park, where she was hired to do research for the NDP caucus in the Ontario Legislature. Her excellent work during this time led to her rise in the

ranks of the NDP, and she laid the foundation for the NDP research department, to the admiration of her colleagues. She was renowned for her very aggressive and thorough research and those biting questions she put to members of the government at the time, and probably set the stage for some of the great questions we get from the other side of the House now.

In 1975, Marion brought the provincial riding of Beaches–Woodbine back to the NDP fold after the riding had been lost to Tom Wardle in 1971. We should know that Beaches–East York, previously Beaches–Woodbine, was a CCF and NDP stronghold for more than 50 years. Marion held the riding from 1975 to 1990. She was then, of course, followed by former NDP Health Minister Frances Lankin, who held the seat for 11 years, and my predecessor, Mr. Prue, who held it for 13 years.

Members from all parties greatly admired the work that Marion did for her 15 years here at the Legislature, and here are a few quotes from June 1990 that I would like to share with everyone here in tribute. First, from Progressive Conservative Don Cousens: "I know the people of Beaches–Woodbine have been well served by a lady who has conscientiously given her best and who has been among the best of any legislators in this place."

Then Liberal Chris Ward, MPP, Wentworth North said, "The commitment" that Marion "gives to her duties and responsibilities here as critic, as a committee person and as an advocate for the causes that she believes in, I think all of us could do well to emulate."

Finally, NDP leader at the time Bob Rae, the MPP for York South, said, "Members from other parties will have an opportunity to reflect on Marion's contributions to this place, on her dedication to her constituents, the fact that we would not have legislation on equal pay, for example, if we had not had the pioneer work that Marion did long before it was fashionable and long before it had the support of other parties."

Mr. Speaker, as I have highlighted throughout this tribute, one of Marion's most passionate subjects was her fight for equal rights for women. She was greatly affected by the backlash and the treatment she had received in her bid to work for government, and as a result of this endemic sexism, Marion believed that all women carry a dual role in the House. She believed that no matter what their appointed tasks, they must also, while they're here, represent women.

She was passionate about many causes. She demonstrated that passion by wearing a different pin daily promoting her favourite cause of the day. This was before we had to seek unanimous consent to wear pins for different causes.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Marion from her own resignation speech of June 28, 1990: "Every one of the 130 members here brings to me an awareness of the diversity of our great province...."

"I would have liked to have seen more women among the faces surrounding me.... I would have liked to have seen a more multicultural House, more visible minorities and some members who could truly call themselves first Canadians."

I think Marion would be very pleased to see what I see here today. This past spring, more women were elected to this chamber than ever before. Two of the three party leaders are women, with perhaps all three being led by women come the next spring.

It's quite clear to me and I'm sure to everyone else in this House that Marion Bryden's dedication to these issues has become a resounding success, and we have all benefited from her efforts. Thank you, Marion, for all you have done for this great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tributes?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to introduce some folks in the gallery who are here today to honour Marion: friends Bill Baulch, Sandra Bussin and Lisa Christensen; former MPP and friend Marilyn Churley; former MPP and friend Ruth Grier; friend Russell Hahn; former MPP and friend Frances Lankin; friend Carolyn Lemon; friend Bruce Logan; friend Eleanor O'Connor; friend and former MPP Michael Prue; and former MPP and former Speaker David Warner. Welcome to Queen's Park.

It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and pay tribute to Marion Bryden. Marion served as an NDP member of provincial Parliament from 1975 to 1990 for the riding of Beaches-Woodbine. During her 15 years at Queen's Park, Marion served as her party's critic for colleges and universities, the solicitor general, correctional services, seniors' issues, revenue and transport.

As a native of Winnipeg, Marion embodied the vision and courageous spirit and personified the very best of Canadian values. By the time she arrived to Queen's Park in 1975, Marion was a force to reckon with. She went from being a scholarship student at the University of Toronto to an expert and published author of several books and publications on taxation policy. Marion also served as a member of the Canadian Council on Social Development, the Elizabeth Fry Society, the Federation of Ontario Naturalists and as president of the Ontario Woodsworth Memorial Foundation. She was an active union drive organizer. One of her campaigns, albeit unfortunately unsuccessful, included the drive to organize Eaton's.

After serving as a member of the federal NDP council for six years, Marion went on to help found the Ontario New Democratic Party in 1961. A few years later, she was hired to do research for the NDP caucus in the Ontario Legislature, and later she was instrumental in putting together the NDP caucus's first official research team.

She was an exemplary representative of the people who was re-elected 14 times. She passed away on February 12, 2013. We thank Marion posthumously for her service and efforts to make our community, our province and our country the best it can be. May you rest in peace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tributes?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm proud to stand on behalf of the New Democratic caucus here in the Legislature to say a few words about Marion Bryden.

Being a woman in politics carries all the challenges of leadership, and then some. It takes toughness, intelligence, empathy and compassion. Behind every woman who dedicates her life to public service stands another strong woman, and another and another.

In fact, we women here today followed Marion Bryden under the limestone arches of this Legislature just as she followed CCF pioneers Agnes Macphail, Margaret Rae Luckock and NDP MPP Margaret Renwick. Today we honour her in the chamber where she once sat as the member of provincial Parliament for the riding of Beaches-Woodbine.

Marion was an incredible woman, as you've heard from the remarks already made by my colleagues in the other two parties, a fierce champion for those less fortunate than herself. She was a member of the Canadian Council on Social Development and the Elizabeth Fry Society. Marion worked tirelessly as a union organizer and, later, a researcher for Tommy Douglas during his first term in office.

Once elected to office herself, she quickly became a political legend. She was an original CCFer and a founding figure for New Democrats everywhere. Marion is, to this day, one of the longest-serving female MPPs in Ontario's history, having served for 15 years in this House.

I know that her friends and colleagues who are here with us today in the spectators' gallery will agree that for Marion, politics was personal and it carried a duty of service. She believed that no one deserved to be left behind in a province as fortunate as Ontario, in a country as rich as Canada. She devoted her career to righting wrongs, to opening every door and to affording equal opportunity to women, to our elders, to young people, to First Nations people, to people of every faith and background, to people who are able-bodied, to people with disabilities, to healthy people, to people who are sick.

Just like her husband, Ken, who preceded her as MPP for Beaches-Woodbine, Marion wasn't afraid to speak up, to take a stand, and to haul cabinet ministers—and the Premier—on the carpet when it came to issues that mattered to Ontarians, like affordable housing and creating jobs for people, no matter where they live in the province.

1530

Marion understood her role as a mentor, and she felt a responsibility to encourage girls and women to get involved in the political process. She lived the struggle. In 1944, when she was called to Saskatchewan to serve as a researcher in Tommy Douglas's first social-democratic government, Marion also became a test case.

It's hard to believe it now, but back then married women weren't supposed to hold jobs in government. The opposition had a field day, but Tommy argued that a person's qualification for the job, not her gender and not her marital status, was all that mattered. The same kind of clear-headed reasoning and basic respect for the rights of individuals gave Canadians universal health care.

Marion earned that job, just like she earned all of the jobs that would follow, through grit, determination and,

frankly, sheer brilliance. We've come a long way since 1917, when Ontario women first fought our way onto the voters' list, and we've made great strides since women began to serve in public office in our province, but we still have a way to go before the gender balance of our Legislature more accurately reflects our voting population.

There are reasons to celebrate. Thanks to the pioneering work of Marion, we're breaking records all the time. In the last election, Ontarians sent a record 38 women from across the province and the political spectrum to represent them at Queen's Park; 44 women ran as New Democrat candidates, the most of any party, and I'm proud to count 10 women as my colleagues in the New Democratic caucus. I think Marion would be proud of us, particularly being able to achieve the milestone of being the first caucus to serve with more than 50% women here at the Ontario Legislature.

There's no doubt that, together, women are making our voices heard, but I think we acknowledge that there is yet more to do. It is up to all of us to continue Marion's work. There is no better way to honour her memory than by keeping up the good fight.

Former NDP MP for Beaches–Woodbine Neil Young summed up Marion well when he said, “Marion was a force to be reckoned with at Queen's Park. She always sought out the best in people and encouraged them to get involved. Marion was instrumental in the building of the NDP, not only in Ontario but across Canada, and above all she gave of herself to our community and gained the respect of us all. She was much loved by us in return.”

Today we remember Marion's contribution to the NDP, to the Beaches community, to Ontario and to the country, and we promise to keep fighting for the ideals that she dedicated her life to serving. Together we can make Ontario a fairer province for our children and for our grandchildren. Marion would expect nothing less from us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their very thoughtful and heartfelt tributes. As is custom and tradition, we will make Hansard and DVDs available upon request. I thank all the members again, and I thank our visitors for being here for a great show of support.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill Pr5, An Act respecting Bible Baptist Temple (St. Thomas).

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr8, An Act respecting Saint Paul University.

Bill Pr10, An Act to revive 752458 Ontario Ltd.

Bill Pr13, An Act to revive Walker Towne Centre Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GASOLINE TAX FAIRNESS FOR ALL ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ POUR TOUS À L'ÉGARD DE LA TAXE SUR L'ESSENCE

Mr. Yakabuski moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 59, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act with respect to matching rebates of gasoline tax that the Minister provides to municipalities / Projet de loi 59, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun à l'égard des remboursements de la taxe sur l'essence similaires consentis aux municipalités par le ministre.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll put my glasses on for this.

The bill amends the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act. If the minister, under section 116 of the act, enters into an agreement with a municipality to provide a rebate of tax, under the Gasoline Tax Act, to the municipality for the purpose of constructing, maintaining or operating a rapid transit or public transportation system, the minister shall not refuse to enter into an agreement to provide a rebate of tax under that act to any other municipality for a purpose related to public highways under the jurisdiction of the latter municipality. The amount of the rebate that the latter municipality receives shall be based on the number of inhabitants in the municipality and the total distance of public highways under the jurisdiction of the municipality.

TARION ACCOUNTABILITY AND OVERSIGHT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION ET LA SURVEILLANCE DE TARION

Mr. Singh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of the corporation designated under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act / Projet de loi 60, Loi modifiant diverses lois à l'égard de la société désignée en application de la Loi sur le Régime de garanties des logements neufs de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce in the House concerned members of the community around the issue of Tarion and members of Canadians for Properly Built Homes; also, members of HOWA. Dr. Karen Somerville is here. Please stand up and be acknowledged.

Applause.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you so much.

The act is the Tarion Accountability and Oversight Act, 2014. The act, essentially, seeks to offer accountability and oversight to Tarion, which is much needed.

I'll just summarize some of the salient issues from the explanatory note.

There's an Ombudsman Act, which would permit the Ombudsman to conduct investigations in respect to Tarion.

This act would also allow the Auditor General to have authority to audit Tarion.

This act would also prescribe Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act amendments which would require the Tarion board members to provide and disclose their salaries.

This act would also require that Tarion bylaws be subject to approval by the government to ensure there's transparency.

The main issue here is, Tarion is not receiving proper oversight and accountability. Numerous members of our community are complaining about it, and we need to address that. This act is a step in the right direction.

1540

TERRY FOX DAY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE JOUR DE TERRY FOX

Ms. Wong moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Terry Fox Day / Projet de loi 61, Loi proclamant le Jour de Terry Fox.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Soo Wong: The bill proclaims the second Sunday after Labour Day in each year as Terry Fox Day.

FAIRNESS IN LABOUR RELATIONS ACT (BARGAINING UNITS AND CERTIFICATION OF TRADE UNIONS), 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ DANS LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (UNITÉS DE NÉGOCIATION ET ACCRÉDITATION DES SYNDICATS)

Mr. McDonnell moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 62, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to the determination of bargaining units and the certification of trade unions / Projet de loi 62, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en ce qui concerne la détermination des unités de négociation et l'accréditation des syndicats.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: The bill, also titled the Fairness in Labour Relations Act, applies to the construction industry and is looking at ensuring that before certification happens there is a representative vote held. A few of the other things included: The board is prohibited from certifying a trade union as a bargaining agent of the employees in a bargaining unit unless a representation vote is held amongst the employees. At present, if a complaint alleges an employer or employers' organization has contravened the act with respect to employment practices, the burden of proof at the inquiry by the board into compliance lies with the employer or the employers' organization. The bill transfers the burden of proof to the complainant.

RETAIL SALES TAX AMENDMENT ACT (HST REBATE FOR HOME HEATING), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA TAXE DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL (REMBOURSEMENT DE LA TVH POUR LE CHAUFFAGE DOMESTIQUE)

Mr. Mantha moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 63, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide for a rebate of the Ontario portion of the Harmonized Sales Tax in respect of certain home heating costs / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la taxe de vente au détail pour prévoir un remboursement de la composante ontarienne de la taxe de vente harmonisée à l'égard de certains frais de chauffage domestique.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Mantha: The bill amends the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide for a rebate in respect to the Ontario portion of the harmonized sales tax for the supply of home heating energy sources, home heating equipment and home heating services. The Lieutenant Governor in Council can make regulations prescribing rules relating to the rebate. The bill provides that the rebate is available upon the comprehensive integrated tax coordination agreement between Ontario and Canada and is amended accordingly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introduction of bills? The member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I move second reading of Bill Pr13, An Act to revive Walker Town Centre—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not doable. It's a PR bill. It's got to go to committee. Sorry.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, it will be part of orders of the day.

Before we move to the next section, I just want to remind members on an ongoing basis—a gentle reminder—that we do introduce bills. The tradition and the practice is to read from the explanatory notes. I've heard some good examples and I've also heard examples of not reading from the explanatory notes. You also can condense the explanatory notes—which I acknowledge one member did—which is a good thing. The idea is: no commentary, no introductions; just the explanatory notes. So I'd appreciate your co-operation.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Wednesday, December 10, 2014, for the purpose of considering government business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that, pursuant to standing order 6(c)(i), the House shall meet from 6:45 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. tonight, Wednesday, December 10, 2014, for the purpose of considering government business. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1546 to 1551.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members please take their seats.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Balkissoon, Bas
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han

Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Kiwala, Sophie
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn

Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Potts, Arthur
Qaadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Vernile, Dalene
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Clark, Steve
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne
Gretzky, Lisa
Hardeman, Ernie
Hatfield, Percy

Hillier, Randy
Horwath, Andrea
MacLeod, Lisa
Mantha, Michael
McDonell, Jim
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick
Pettapiece, Randy

Sattler, Peggy
Scott, Laurie
Singh, Jagmeet
Smith, Todd
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 43; the nays are 34.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: This is perhaps the shortest petition in the history of this Legislature.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario keep the obstetrics unit open at Leamington District Memorial Hospital."

I approve of this petition, affix my name to it and give it to Mikaila, who is from Leamington.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas emergency response workers (paramedics, police officers, and firefighters) confront traumatic events on a nearly daily basis to provide safety to the public; and

"Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work; and

"Whereas Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder' sets out that if an emergency

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Baker, Yvan

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gravelle, Michael

McMahon, Eleanor
Meilleur, Madeleine
Milczyn, Peter Z.

response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder is presumed to be an occupational disease that occurred due to their employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary is shown;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder.'"

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition and will give it to page Moiz to deliver to the Clerks' table.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition on ending coal for cleaner air in Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians have growing concerns surrounding climate change and the quality of our air, it is integral that more is done to provide Ontarians with cleaner air;

"Whereas the combustion of coal to generate electricity is conducive toward higher levels of carbon dioxide emissions, which pollute the air and contribute immensely toward climate change;

"Whereas the cessation of coal use as a means of generating electricity in the Atikokan, Lambton, Nanticoke, and Thunder Bay generating facilities will result in cleaner air for Ontarians, which will ensure the long-term preservation of our air, environment, and public health;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 9, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, to stop generating facilities from using coal to produce electricity, which will eliminate high levels of carbon dioxide emissions and will in turn ensure cleaner air for Ontarians now and for future generations."

Mr. Speaker, if I can have your attention, I sign this petition, and I shall give it to Albany.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas recent hospital bed closures at Winchester District Memorial Hospital highlighted the need for stable and reliable funding for hospitals in order to maintain their ability to provide sufficient beds, staffing and resources to patients; and

"Whereas other cuts to health services such as those to in-residence physiotherapy and blood sugar test strips leave vulnerable citizens, especially seniors, at higher risk of debilitating conditions and accidents; and

"Whereas all Ontario residents deserve an efficient, affordable and accessible health care system;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately review health funding levels and strategies with a view to increasing patients' access to both acute and chronic care, including through increased funding for hospital, retirement and long-term-care beds, increased home care provision, health support supplies such as insulin pumps and increased access to affordable or free preventive care."

I agree with this and will be handing it off to page Tyler.

1600

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition from right across Ontario.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

"Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

"Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000" people in Ontario "today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

"Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

"Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

"Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research."

Speaker, I agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to Ella to take up to the desk.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for

certain energy sources, including the world's highest subsidies for solar power; and

"Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through the global adjustment, which can account for almost half of a ratepayer's hydro bill; and

"Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impacting the quality of life of Ontario's residents, especially" those on fixed incomes; and

"Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mismanagement in the energy sector by implementing immediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper *Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy*;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009, and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates and abolishing expensive surcharges such as the global adjustment and debt retirement charges."

I will pass it off to page Elijah. I agree with the petition.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Cindy Forster: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's disease, Alzheimer's, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia is increasingly endemic in Canada, but current testing is extremely limited in terms of accuracy of detecting the causative spirochete (Health Canada, 2012);

"Whereas persistence of infection beyond the recommended duration of antibiotic regime has been shown to occur (Sapi et al., 2011). Formation of biofilm and cystic forms of *B. burgdorferi*, the causative agent of Lyme disease, has been shown to exist, further complicating treatment options (Sapi et al., 2012);

"Whereas existence of co-infective species of bacteria often persists along with infection of *B. burgdorferi* (Swanson et al., 2006);

"Whereas the CDC itself has recently promoted the yearly incidence of Lyme disease from 30,000 cases per year to 300,000 (CDC, 2013);

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to both include all currently available and scientifically verified tests, including non-antibody-based testing kits, for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to fund research and development efforts on more accurate, reliable and direct diagnostic and treatment protocols which take into account co-infection and other complications."

I support this petition and will sign it and deliver it with page Johann.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the customers of Algoma Power, are being charged astronomical costs referred to as 'delivery fees';

"Whereas we, the customers of Algoma Power, would like the 'delivery fees' looked into and regulated so as to protect the consumer from big businesses gouging the consumer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Stop Algoma Power's influx of fees for delivery and stop the onset of increasing these fees another 40% within four years."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and present it to page Moiz to bring it down to the Clerk.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Steven to bring to the Clerk.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades;

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople;

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encour-

aging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Hannah.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads:

"Whereas quality care for the 77,000 residents of long-term-care (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families;

"Whereas over the last 10 years 50% of Ontario's hospital-based complex continuing care beds have been closed by the provincial government; and, there has been a 29.7% increase in the acuity level of LTC residents and 73% of LTC residents in Ontario suffer from some form of Alzheimer's or dementia;

"Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in long-term-care homes keeps pace with residents' increasing acuity and a growing number of residents with complex behaviours such as dementia and Alzheimer's;

"Whereas there is extensive evidence that a care standard can result in increased staff levels, which translates into improved quality of care for residents;

"Whereas for over a decade several Ontario coroner's inquests into nursing deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and increase in staffing levels;

"Whereas the Ontario Liberal government first promised a legislated care standard for residents in the province's long-term-care homes in 2003 but in 2013 they have yet to make good on their promise;

"Whereas the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) empowers the provincial government to create a minimum standard—but falls short of actually creating one;

"Whereas the most detailed and reputable study of minimum care standards recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day; and

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) An amendment must be made to the Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) for a legislated care standard of a minimum four hours per resident each day adjusted for acuity level and case mix;

"(2) The province must increase funding in order for long-term-care homes to achieve a staffing and care standard and tie public funding for homes to the provision of quality care and staffing levels that meet the legislated minimum care standard of four hours;

"(3) To ensure accountability the province must make public reporting of staffing levels at each Ontario LTC home mandatory;

"(4) The province must immediately provide funding for specialized facilities for persons with cognitive impairment who have been assessed as potentially aggressive, and staff them with sufficient numbers of appropriately trained workers;

"(5) The province must stop closing complex continuing care beds and alternative-level-of-care beds to end the downloading of hospital patients with complex medical conditions to long-term-care homes."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, will sign it and send it with page Elijah.

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HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have another petition here, also addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province's social, economic and multicultural fabric;

"We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature to it and give it to page Kate to bring forward.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister has moved a motion to move ahead with private members' bills and is seeking unanimous consent. All in favour? Agreed.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I move that the orders for second and third reading of the following private bills shall be called consecutively and that the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bills be put immediately without debate: Bills Pr1, Pr2, Pr3, Pr4, Pr5, Pr6, Pr8, Pr9, Pr10, Pr11, Pr12 and Pr13; and that Mr. Vanthof may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr2 on behalf of Ms. Sattler, that Mr. Vanthof may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr4 on behalf of Ms. Gélinas, that Mr. Clark may move

the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr9 on behalf of Mr. Fedeli, and that Mr. Vanthof may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr10 on behalf of Mr. Singh.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

LORETTO LADIES' COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS ACT, 2014

Mr. Colle moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr1, An Act respecting The Loretto Ladies' Colleges and Schools.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

LORETTO LADIES' COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS ACT, 2014

Mr. Colle moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr1, An Act respecting The Loretto Ladies' Colleges and Schools.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

1474486 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Vanthof, on behalf of Ms. Sattler, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr2, An Act to revive 1474486 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

1474486 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Vanthof, on behalf of Ms. Sattler, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr2, An Act to revive 1474486 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

BENSFORT WOOD INC. ACT, 2014

Ms. Scott moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr3, An Act to revive Bensfort Wood Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

BENSFORT WOOD INC. ACT, 2014

Ms. Scott moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr3, An Act to revive Bensfort Wood Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

BRUNO'S ALIGNMENT LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Vanthof, on behalf of M^{me} Gélinas, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr4, An Act to revive Bruno's Alignment Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

BRUNO'S ALIGNMENT LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Vanthof, on behalf of M^{me} Gélinas, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr4, An Act to revive Bruno's Alignment Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

BIBLE BAPTIST TEMPLE (ST. THOMAS) ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Yurek moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr5, An Act respecting Bible Baptist Temple (St. Thomas).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

BIBLE BAPTIST TEMPLE (ST. THOMAS) ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Yurek moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr5, An Act respecting Bible Baptist Temple (St. Thomas).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carried. Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

ART GALLERY OF GUELPH ACT, 2014

Mr. Arnott moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr6, An Act respecting The Macdonald Stewart Community Art Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

ART GALLERY OF GUELPH ACT, 2014

Mr. Arnott moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr6, An Act respecting The Macdonald Stewart Community Art Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

SAINT PAUL UNIVERSITY ACT, 2014

Mr. Fraser moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr8, An Act respecting Saint Paul University.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

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SAINT PAUL UNIVERSITY ACT, 2014

Mr. Fraser moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr8, An Act respecting Saint Paul University.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

1807041 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2014

Mr. Clark, on behalf of Mr. Fedeli, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr9, An Act to revive 1807041 Ontario Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

1807041 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2014

Mr. Clark, on behalf of Mr. Fedeli, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr9, An Act to revive 1807041 Ontario Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

752458 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2014

Mr. Vanthof, on behalf of Mr. Singh, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr10, An Act to revive 752458 Ontario Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

752458 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2014

Mr. Vanthof, on behalf of Mr. Singh, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr10, An Act to revive 752458 Ontario Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

469118 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Colle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr11, An Act to revive 469118 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

469118 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Colle moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr11, An Act to revive 469118 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

658055 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2014

Mr. Colle moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr12, An Act to revive 658055 Ontario Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

658055 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2014

Mr. Colle moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr12, An Act to revive 658055 Ontario Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

WALKER TOWNE CENTRE
INC. ACT, 2014

Mr. Hatfield moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr13, An Act to revive Walker Towne Centre Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

WALKER TOWNE CENTRE
INC. ACT, 2014

Mr. Hatfield moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr13, An Act to revive Walker Towne Centre Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BETTER BUSINESS CLIMATE ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 VISANT À INSTAURER
UN CLIMAT PLUS PROPICE
AUX AFFAIRES

Mr. Leal, on behalf of Mr. Duguid, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 7, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'obligation de faire rapport concernant la réduction des fardeaux administratifs et la Loi de 2014 sur les partenariats pour la création d'emplois et la croissance.

Mr. Leal.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I just want to let you know that I will be sharing my time with the very competent new member, MPP Lalonde, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Economic Development and the outstanding member from Ottawa—Orléans.

This legislation is a clear reflection of our government working with key stakeholders to continue to grow Ontario's economy through burden reduction and cluster development. One of CFIB's biggest asks from governments across the country is an open and transparent commitment to burden reduction. They are strongly supportive of this outstanding bill.

Ian Howcroft, whom I just had the opportunity to meet this morning, the vice-president of CME Ontario, agrees with CFIB: "Bill 7 will establish the reporting framework necessary to drive results in this area. The legislation also sends a strong signal to investors that the government is prepared to support industry-driven cluster development

where appropriate. We applaud this step in the right direction."

Our government—your government—understands that creating a successful business climate means reducing unnecessary regulations and practices. This is why, through this legislation, governments will report on burden reduction on an annual basis, Mr. Speaker, holding our feet to the fire—very important.

This isn't about what we regulate but how we do it. Bill 7 goes further than burden reduction to keep our economy on track as it's going. Our government understands the critical importance of cluster development. As the Toronto Board of Trade puts it, clusters collaborate to compete. This will be the first legislation of its kind in North America—

Interjections: Wow.

Hon. Jeff Leal: —wow—to focus on cluster development. That's outstanding. Bill 7 will help businesses grow and clusters stay competitive, even in Perth county, to continue to create jobs for today and tomorrow.

As I said, I will be sharing my time with the very able parliamentary assistant, and at this time, I will turn it over to the PA, the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm sorry; it's a rotation. You have to share your time.

Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to very briefly comment on Bill 7 at third reading. As you know, Mr. Speaker, this bill has been the subject of some debate at second reading. Unfortunately, the government used time allocation to curtail the debate, which prevented a number of our members from speaking on the bill, and they would have liked to have had that opportunity.

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However, the bill was sent to a standing committee of the Legislature. We had one day of public hearings and we heard from a number of groups, including, I believe, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business—actually, I'm sorry; they sent a brief. It was a written brief. But we appreciated their recommendations. As the minister correctly pointed out, the CFIB is supportive of this bill, and I'm pleased to inform the House that our caucus is going to be supporting it as well.

But we also want to express our appreciation for the fact that some of our amendments were actually adopted and accepted by the committee. I want to thank the member for Lanark—

Mr. Randy Hillier: —Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Ted Arnott: —Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, who served on the committee—subbed in, actually, to serve on the committee—earlier this week, on Monday, to assist in the—

Mr. Randy Hillier: I fell off my chair when the Liberal government accepted our amendments.

Mr. Ted Arnott: We brought forward our amendments in the spirit of constructive co-operation, hoping that the government would listen, and we have to

acknowledge, of course, that they did, and a couple of our amendments were adopted into law to strengthen the bill. So we again express our appreciation to the members who participated in the committee, and we look forward to the government keeping its commitments in this respect.

But we would really add that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has a long list of red-tape-reduction requests. I talked about that during the second reading debate, and I would say to the Minister of Economic Development to continue to work with the CFIB and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. We've got to do far more than we've been doing in the last 11 years in terms of reducing the red tape burden on small business.

We must remember at all times that it is the small business sector that creates the majority of new jobs in Ontario, especially coming out of an economic downturn. Every hour that a small business person is forced to set aside to spend time working on the requests and the expectations of government, whether it be red tape or government forms, is an hour that is, in many cases, wasted. It takes away the time that those small business people have in terms of servicing their customers and finding new ones.

So we again recommend to the government that they have to keep their commitments with respect to reducing red tape, and we will certainly do our job in opposition to ensure that—or at least to draw attention to the excessive red tape burden in the future. We encourage the government to really take a sincere effort to reduce the red tape burden in the province of Ontario.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. It looks like this debate isn't going to go on too long, but we certainly look forward to the other comments that the members will have over the course of this debate. As I said, it is our caucus's intention to support this bill when it comes to a third reading vote.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's again an honour to be able to stand in this chamber and speak to this bill on behalf of my constituents in Windsor–Tecumseh. The bill, better known as the Better Business Climate Act, is also known as the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act and the Burden Reduction Reporting Act.

Bill 7 speaks to the importance of industry clusters, and as you know, Speaker, Windsor and Essex county is home to a major cluster of automotive-related industries, be it mould-making, tool and die or plastics. They all complement our vehicle and engine plants. We in the Windsor region build the best minivans in the world at Chrysler and we build the best engines in the world at Ford. Speaker, don't let anyone try to tell you differently. We have the best employees. They're well-trained and dedicated workers, and they wish to see their companies thrive well into the future.

We can argue and disagree about many things in this House, some things big, some things small, but one thing I believe we can all agree on is that we have lost about

300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs in Ontario in the past 10 years or so. I'm not one to point fingers; I'm not laying this at the feet of the minister or the feet of the Premier or the government. I'm just saying, these jobs are gone. We must do everything in our power on both sides of the House to preserve the manufacturing jobs that remain in Ontario. And we must find a way to attract more manufacturing jobs to this province before it's too late.

This bill will cut some of the regulatory burdens, the red tape that can be a nuisance and a barrier to quick decisions and approvals, but that's not to say that all red tape is bad, or all regulations. Much of the red tape in the industry is here to protect our workers on the plant floor. We need those regulations to ensure we have strong health and safety guidelines that are adhered to.

What we need in this province—actually, what we need in this country—is a government policy, a long-term manufacturing strategy. Specifically, what with all the talk these days about more automotive jobs on the chopping block, our priority in this bill should be to develop a coherent automotive strategy. We need policy initiatives that send a clear signal to the corporate manufacturing boardrooms around the globe: "Ontario wants your business. Ontario welcomes your business. Ontario wants to be a partner with you to grow your business. We can help train your workforce. We want to hear more about your plans for research and development. Tell us what you need by way of new equipment, new technology and new machinery." We should be asking, "How can we improve your productivity?" We need improvements to this bill that create the right business climate that will convince companies to invest in Ontario again.

We need a commitment that Ontario is developing a manufacturing vision for the future, for the next 10, 20, even 30 years. We need to know and understand the manufacturing trends. We have to get ahead of the industry curve and stay there. We need an educated workforce that is prepared for the products that industry will be building in the future. We need to be designing and testing those products, we need to be talking to the leading experts in the field and we need to be listening to what they say. We need to take their advice.

We need the conversations, yes, but more than anything, we need the action. We need to be seen as actually doing something to protect our manufacturing base as we set into place the initiatives that are needed to grow our industrial clusters. This bill can be a launching pad for those discussions for those actions, but we need deadlines and we need a firm resolve to make it happen.

There's a group called the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council. They represent all five of Ontario's car manufacturers and the big parts producers. They represent Unifor as well as the University of Windsor. They have a keen interest in this bill. The chair of that group is Don Walker, who is also the chair of the board at Magna International. He was calling on the provincial and federal governments to have an industry-led advisory board in order to promote automotive investment in Canada.

Members of the Automotive Partnership Council are united in their commitment to ensuring the automotive industry continues to provide high-quality jobs, high-paying jobs for Canadians and for economic growth. They want to work with government to advance a clear and achievable strategy for the future growth of the manufacturing industry.

That's exactly what the state of Michigan did. Michigan has reaped the rewards from that strategy. They've secured most of North America's automotive investment in recent years. In fact, Michigan overtook us last year and now assembles more vehicles than Ontario, and has become the largest manufacturer of vehicles by state or province in North America.

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But when the group met with federal Industry Minister James Moore about their concerns, they got the cold shoulder. The feds questioned how an industry-led investment advisory board could be of any help to them.

Automotive expert Tony Fera, a friend of mine from the University of Windsor—he's co-director of the office of automotive research at the university—was quoted in the Windsor Star in a story detailing what happened at this meeting with the Canadian Automotive Partnership Council. He says, "CAPC represents people who are clearly on top of what's going on in the auto industry. If you don't listen to this group, who are you going to listen to?"

I just shake my head when I hear that. Senior ministers can't be bothered to listen to the experts when there is so much at stake for our country. We should be on the shop floor talking to the men and women who work in Ontario's industrial sector. They live it every day. We should be listening to their union reps, as well as company managers and CEOs.

Speaker, you may have heard the name Flavio Volpe. He's head of the Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association. He says we should be looking to Michigan and Mexico, and adopting their best practices, if we hope to be a player in the global competition for automotive investment. Michigan and Mexico each have a coordinated, proactive, aggressive approach toward chasing and securing automotive investment. We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. This bill won't bring all of them back, but a new policy, a strategy for the future, would help to secure jobs that otherwise may go elsewhere.

It's a sad fact of life that the number of people currently working in our provincial manufacturing sector is at a 40-year low. Since Statistics Canada started counting such numbers back in 1976, our manufacturing job numbers have never been as low as they are today. Where one in five jobs in Ontario was once related to our manufacturing base, now we're below 11%. We went from 20% to a drop to 11% and beyond. We need to reposition our manufacturing sector. We need to do whatever it takes to get our house in order before it's too late.

Job numbers: I know that, no matter whom you talk to, there will be different sets of numbers used in an attempt

to win an argument when it comes to jobs. The facts are that while we may see a slight increase in job numbers, those jobs were in the service industry. They are not full-time jobs. They don't come with benefits. They are for precarious employment—part-time work—and unfortunately, many of our friends and relatives are taking them involuntarily for the simple reason that they need work and can't find a full-time job.

There was a study not that long ago by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Economist Kaylie Tiessen deduced that we were seeing a seismic shift in employment. Our middle class, those of us earning between \$30,000 and \$60,000 a year, used to be 31% of the population. That study was quoting numbers in 2011. We used to be at 31%; it dropped to 26.5%. Service-industry jobs used to make up 73% of jobs, and now they're at 79%. She called it the hourglassing of employment, where the middle class is being squeezed from all sides.

When we lose our manufacturing jobs, our entire communities lose out. In my local newspaper, the Windsor Star, last weekend there was a story about the United Way campaign. The men and women who build the minivans I referenced earlier and the retirees who used to work at the Windsor assembly plant have donated, for the 27th year in a row—let me repeat that: For the 27th year in a row, Chrysler workers and retirees in Windsor and Essex county have donated more than \$1 million to the United Way campaign in Windsor and Essex county. I applaud their generosity. That's one plant, one campaign.

The Ford of Canada workers, although fewer in number, donate similarly on a prorated basis for the size of their reduced workforce, as do the men and women, other Unifor members, in the hundreds of plants which supply the parts to the engines and the vehicles built in Ontario.

This bill may hold a spark of promise for a brighter future in Ontario. That's what we need in my area. I'll tell you why we need a promise of better times ahead: The poverty level in Windsor and Essex county is the highest in the country. It doesn't make me proud to say it, but I won't shrink away from saying it, either. Our economy is based on the automotive sector. That manufacturing cluster is not doing as well as it used to.

The latest statistics show that 33% of the people in my area live in poverty. That's the highest rate in Canada. You have to go to Sherbrooke, Quebec to find the second-highest rate. Ours is 33%; theirs is 21%. In Ontario, we're at 33%. Sudbury, in second place, is at 18.6%.

Our United Way campaign, which last year raised \$5 million and assisted 47,000 people, has set a goal this year of \$5.2 million. The United Way's CEO Lorraine Goddard recently told the Windsor Star that because of the number of people living in poverty in our area and the ratio of those who eventually find a way out of poverty, we'll still be left with 4,000 children who will never break out of the poverty cycle—never. Four thousand kids. So when we speak of the need to do something in this House before it's too late to save Ontario's auto

sector, to save our manufacturing base, don't dare tell me we're doing everything we possibly can.

We need to do more. We need a strategy. We need policies. We've seen first-hand in Windsor and Essex county what a loss of manufacturing jobs can do to a community. We know we would be a heck of a lot worse if it wasn't for the generosity of the donors to the United Way, most of whom are union members still employed in the automotive sector.

We see the long lineups at our food banks. We see the lineups when the Unemployed Help Centre puts on their Coats for Kids campaign. We know the struggles others are having to put food on the table across our province. We know the greed that some companies have, and we don't have to go far from this chamber to see it first-hand here in Toronto.

There's a manufacturing company not far from here, Crown Holdings. They make more than five million cans a day, and most of those cans go to Labatt and Molson for beer. Last year, in 2013, the workers were honoured with a team award for dedication, commitment, teamwork and personal accountability. The company was honoured by its American head office for outstanding safety, productivity, quality and budget management.

And then contract talks rolled around. The company was making money hand over fist, yet said it was going to cut wages by 42% and get rid of the cost-of-living clause, introduce a two-tier wage system, and continue the nine-year freeze on pensions. And then, they forced the workers out—locked them out until the company's demands were met.

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That was in early September 2013, the same week that I took my seat here in this Legislature. Those proud United Steelworkers are still on the picket line, still locked out by a greedy American employer. That's why I won't be buying my beer in cans until this strike is over. Those men and women can return to work with their heads held high. They are standing up for manufacturing jobs in this province.

I call in the labour minister to intervene. I call on him to send the scabs home and get the two sides back to the bargaining table. This lockout was caused by company greed, pure and simple. The bill speaks to partnerships. The labour minister could partner with the company and the union on behalf of the labour climate in this province. This bill could be improved with the minister's intervention.

I talked to the minister about this yesterday. I've called on him to get his people working on this and get those people back to work.

I also ask anyone within earshot today to order your beer in bottles this holiday season. Stay away from the cans; stick with the bottles until this lockout is over and the steelworkers are back on the job where they belong.

Let's think about the future for a moment. Experts vary on this, but for every automotive job created in Ontario, there are between six and nine or 10 other jobs created in the spinoff from those well-paying automotive

jobs. If that's true, and I, for one, have no doubt about it, as I've seen the results in my riding of Windsor-Tecumseh—I tend to agree with the higher number, by the way, that nine or 10 spinoff jobs are created for every automotive manufacturing job—then it makes sense that for every automotive job lost, there will be a higher number of jobs cut from the service industry. Think about it: When you don't have as many people coming into your store or your bar or your restaurant, you may say you don't need as many salespeople or servers or mechanics or whatever.

So when we speak of the number of automotive jobs or manufacturing jobs, we have to use that six to nine or 10 jobs multiplier to get a clear sense of what the trickle-down effects are on Ontario's economy. That's why it is so important, so timely, so absolutely necessary for the government to get serious about a made-in-Ontario automotive policy, a made-in-Ontario manufacturing strategy.

We have to do more to be competitive with the so-called right-to-work states, otherwise known as the right-to-work-for-less states in America, and we have to have discussions with the auto manufacturers to send more business to Ontario instead of Mexico.

I'm told that someone working in a car plant in Mexico is paid \$8 an hour. That benefits the people who own shares in the big car companies, but what does that say to those of us who have seen the social consequences of people thrown out of work in our communities because jobs have been lost, plants closed and the work transferred to the company's assembly plant in Mexico?

There is another side of this. We all know the challenges facing us with global warming. Here's the rub, the sand being kicked in our faces, if you will: We lose the jobs to Mexico, and Mexico continues to pollute the air as ever before. We close our coal plants, we struggle to cut our emissions to improve the air we breathe in Ontario as part of a worldwide campaign to combat global warming, and yet Mexico is still the world's 13th-largest emitter of carbon dioxide. They don't have penalties for failing to meet the emissions targets. Mexico's air is bad. Some say Mexico's air is really bad. But the manufacturers can build vehicles there cheaper than they can build them here. So Mexico wins; we lose. We all lose if we don't do more to save our manufacturing jobs.

When word leaked recently that a new Ford engine plant was headed to Mexico instead of Windsor, two of the company's employees from my area decided to do something about it. Jessica John and Heather MacDonald started an online petition. Jessica works on the assembly line manufacturing the five-litre V8s at Ford's Essex engine plant. Heather builds the 5.4-litre V8s. Both are mums with young children. They're worried about their future, worried about the future of the Canadian manufacturing industry, worried that automotive jobs are on the line and worried that the provincial government isn't seen to be doing much about it. That's a scary thing in my riding of Windsor-Tecumseh: Because there is no automotive policy or strategy to secure and maintain manufacturing jobs, mums with small kids, worried about

the future of their families, have taken it upon themselves to do something because they don't believe the provincial government is taking their concerns very seriously.

We on this side of the House, members of the New Democratic Party caucus, are taking this matter seriously. We see this bill as an opportunity to turn around and jumpstart the economy in this province; improve it; bring in a real automotive and manufacturing strategy; make policies to save our automotive industry, save our jobs, save our communities and protect our future.

When I was putting this together, I came across some interesting statistics about poverty in Ontario and poverty in Canada. In Ontario, nearly 20% more people are using food banks today than there were in 2008. Some 176,000 families are relying on food banks—375,000 individuals—each week, each month and each year in Ontario; 35% of them are children under the age of 18.

One in five kids still live poverty, according to a new study—one in five in Canada. Some 1.2 million Canadian children go to school hungry every day, 550,000 children here in Ontario. Worse still, if you're a child in a single-parent family in Ontario, the rate of poverty is 44%. One half of all children born to immigrant parents live in poverty in Toronto. Nearly one third of the city's children live in poverty.

We can do something about that if we get together on this bill. If we can get together and do something to make improvements, to create more jobs, to save our manufacturing industry, to save our automotive strategy—we need something, Speaker. Thank you for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Merci, monsieur le Président. Today, I'm pleased to have the opportunity to discuss this proposed legislation, which all three parties supported through second reading last week. If passed, this bill will create a better business climate by reducing burdens and drive economic growth by supporting the development of clusters.

I am pleased to report that a collaborative approach was taken in committee. Considering one of my colleagues almost fell off of his chair, it's glad to report. The proposed legislation is key to building on stronger partnerships across the economy. It's about providing more streamlined government services to businesses and reducing regulatory burden. But let me be clear: We must take care in balancing regulations needed to protect the welfare of our people while reducing unnecessary burdens for business.

Mr. Speaker, we're committed to reducing unnecessary burdens on an ongoing basis and making Ontario one of the few places in the world that measures and reports on the time and financial savings to business.

We are pleased to be recognized as a leader in the reduction of unnecessary regulatory requirements by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, who applauded us when we announced our intention to legislate burden reduction.

1700

Holding the government accountable on burden reduction also has strong support from stakeholders such as the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Toronto Financial Services Alliance and the Toronto Region Board of Trade. Since 2008, we have eliminated over 80,000 burdens, and we're making further improvements that will save businesses \$100 million over the next three years. The world of business is constantly changing, and government needs to keep pace by continually making government-to-business interactions faster, smarter and easier.

By committing government to annual reporting, this legislation will ensure that all future governments stay focused on reducing burden and modernizing processes. Ontario will not only catch up to other leading jurisdictions; it will leap to the head of the line.

The second component to the proposed Better Business Climate Act is supporting cluster development which, through collaboration and a cluster-focused lens, is as important as reducing burdens to businesses. Clusters exist across the province, and Ontario is home to some of the most impressive clusters in the world. For example, the Toronto region is North America's second-largest financial services hub after New York, and contributes over \$54 billion in GDP to Canada.

If passed, our government will be the first jurisdiction in North America to legislate the importance of cluster development. This legislation, if passed, will provide our government with a new tool to help clusters through cluster development plans. This tool will help facilitate stronger planning and collaboration with industry and partner ministries. Ontario will facilitate new partnerships by working with industry leaders, research institutions and local governments to identify policies that will support a long-term vision and plan for cluster growth. The role of industry in the development of cluster plans will be critical.

We understand that government cannot create clusters, but we can collaborate with our partners to develop a plan. Collaboration with Ontario's key clusters will allow governments to better allocate and coordinate access to government programs and help shape future policy.

To build upon the success of these cluster plans and ensure they are aligned with changing industry and economic trends, mandatory reviews of the plans will be required every five years.

As always, we encourage discussion and input from all members of the House. So, whether it's reducing burdens to help improve our business climate and save businesses time and money, our government's economic plan will continue to get results and will continue to create jobs for today and tomorrow by focusing on our greatest strengths, our people and the partnerships we can foster together.

I thank you very much. Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Merci beaucoup. Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate. In fact, I'm honoured to join the debate, and following

my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh I had some thoughts.

He spoke very eloquently on our region, Windsor–Essex. We have a long and proud history of being the automotive capital of Canada and indeed know the nature of industrial clusters. I want to commend him for bringing some of those really important points and facts into the debate. He's someone who's incredibly knowledgeable about our area, our industry, our needs, our challenges, our history. He's been telling the stories of our community. For many years, prior to being elected as a member of provincial Parliament, he was a journalist with the CBC, and I certainly appreciate and welcome his thoughts on it. He touched on so many different aspects about the challenges that face various regions, but particularly in our region of Windsor and Essex county when it comes to the industrial base and the manufacturing base. We, of course, have tier 1 automotive suppliers: GM, Chrysler and Ford. Unfortunately, we don't have GM any longer. We had the transmission plant and the trim plant, the trim plant where my mom worked for 35 years as an industrial seamstress, sewing head—

Interjection: Seats.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —seats and everything else. But that plant is gone. Then we lost the transmission plant that was building transmissions for Cavaliers and Cobalts. That left town. So there are a couple of thousand—I would say upwards of 5,000—good-paying manufacturing jobs, unionized jobs that came with benefits and pensions. Those are gone.

What are the factors that have led to the massive exodus of good-paying manufacturing jobs? Well, I would point to, primarily, the imposition of the initial free trade agreement, the precursor to the free trade agreement, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, and then the subsequent North American Free Trade Agreement that opened the doors to cheap imported products from other jurisdictions, mainly Mexico, that definitely, as we've seen over the years, have led to a lower standard in manufacturing but higher profits for the manufacturers. I point, as a number one causal effect of our decrease in manufacturing jobs, specifically in the automotive sector, to the free trade agreement.

There are other ramifications of free trade that are playing out around our province. We see it in London with the exodus of the Kellogg's plant. There are our food—

Interjection: Agriculture.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —agriculture and food industries that are leaving. We see the federal government and policies that have bolstered oil production—consumption, really, but also production, certainly—in the west, that have tied our dollar artificially and inflated our dollar to a petro dollar and have made domestic manufacturing out of reach. That can't be argued. We know. We're seeing it today: As the price per barrel goes down, the value of the dollar follows.

There are so many different aspects of this bill that the government put forward that fall short of what we need.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh specifically highlighted an automotive policy, a provincial strategy that would address the issues that we all know need to be addressed. It is our hope that the government comes out with something substantive at some point in their four-year tenure to actually address those problems in a real, tangible way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I am pleased to rise today on behalf of my constituents in the beautiful riding of Algoma–Manitoulin to add my voice to the debate on Bill 7. It is unfortunate that not many of my colleagues here are following suit.

First, I would like to mention that this bill was time-allocated. So as much as I was looking forward to talking about the contents of this bill, the government has limited the amount of time we can debate as it moves the bill quickly through the House so that they can pass it.

My colleagues and I are opposed to the time allocation motion. Debate around proposed legislation is important. It's important to people in Algoma–Manitoulin; it's important to people across this province.

Debate is a discussion of questions of public interest in Parliament. Debate is a method of interactive and representational arguments. Debate is a robust analysis of questions at hand. Debate is a rigorous self-examination. Most importantly, debate is an essential tool for developing and maintaining democracy in an open society.

When debate is silenced, our democracy suffers. The people of Ontario are not heard.

Les mots de Joseph Joubert sonnent clair quand nous sommes présentés avec des propositions comme celle-ci. Il a dit : « Il vaut mieux débattre d'une question sans la régler que la régler sans en avoir débattu. » Normalement, nous avons jusqu'à 12 heures de débat pour un projet de loi tel quel. Présentement, ce sont seulement six heures de débat que nous voyons. La sagesse de M. Joubert fait écho à Queen's Park ces jours-ci.

1710

Bill 7, similar to so many other bills we have seen presented in this House since the Liberals took office, also has a very positive title—perhaps another bill presented by this government that appears to sound good but doesn't do very much. It seems so.

Bill 7 combines two pieces of legislation previously introduced, under one title. The first enacts the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014, which requires the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure to publish an annual report with respect to actions taken by the government of Ontario to reduce regulatory burdens. The second enacts the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014, which states that the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure may prepare plans with respect to the development of clusters.

The bill goes on to stipulate that as part of the preparation of the plan, the minister must consult with persons or

entities that have an interest in the development of clusters. The plan must contain specific items, including the objectives and intended outcomes of the cluster plan and performance measures. The minister is required to review the plan and make public a report with respect to the results in its review. The minister is given various regulation-making powers with respect to the plan.

What does this all mean? Well, today, I will spend my time focusing on the cluster, or, en français, une grappe industrielle—un gros mot pour toi.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Un réseau industriel?

M. Michael Mantha: Une grappe industrielle.

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Grappe?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Grappe. G-R-A-P-P-E. And hopefully we can have a better understanding of what this bill actually does specifically in regard to clusters.

«Une grappe industrielle...est une concentration d'entreprises et d'institutions interreliées dans un domaine particulier sur un territoire géographique. Les grappes couvrent un ensemble d'industries liées et d'autres entités importantes pour la compétitivité. Elles comprennent, par exemple, des fournisseurs de produits spécialisés comme des composantes, de la machinerie, des services et des fournisseurs d'infrastructures spécialisées.»

The cluster aspect of this bill, if there was any substance to it, could directly support and affect how the Ring of Fire is developed, something that I hold very near and dear. Of course, first we would need some substance to the Ring of Fire plan, but for now, let's leave that discussion to another day.

The second schedule specifically states that the minister may prepare plans regarding the development of clusters, and then goes on to explain the necessary information to be included if these plans are actually possible—a piece of legislation stating that the minister could, maybe, possibly, do something, but not necessarily. I'm a bit lost as to how this “possibly” of action creates a better business climate in Ontario.

What I do know is that a study done by the Rockefeller Foundation supports regional clusters as one of the best ways to create more jobs. According to the authors of the study, Mark Muro and Kenan Fikri—did I say that right? You're usually good to correct me.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: OK, c'est beau. I said it right.

“Properly designed, cluster strategies are a low-cost way to stimulate innovation, new firm start-ups and job creation.”

Where regional clusters are concerned, the government needs to include the usual formula of research and development, tax credits, training programs and physical infrastructure. But additionally, the government needs to develop and use data and rigorous analysis to identify clusters, target policies and track performance; establish a modest grant program to address discrete gaps in cluster performances; and reorient existing economic development programs, policies and initiatives to support clusters. However, this bill, the Better Business Climate

Act, does not include any of these strategies. The government needs to include some regulatory framework, some dollars to support cluster initiatives, some incentives to bring firms together in a specific regional cluster strategy, and some resources to encourage cluster innovation through regional networking.

Like my previous private member's bill calling for resources mined in Ontario to be refined in Ontario, when we look at a project as a whole and come up with a real job creation plan, we can get people back to work across this province. When we look at the potential, all the possibilities in the Ring of Fire, we don't just have thousands of mining jobs; we have transportation jobs. We can build refineries and create jobs in refining.

We have seen steel companies closing up shop in Canada; it's time for a strategy here in manufacturing. We will have raw resources. We need to refine and manufacture, rather than shipping raw resources abroad and buying back the finished product. We can make this happen. We can get the people working. We can pull the province out of deficit. As I have said before, we need action on the Ring of Fire, and we need to get people moving.

In closing, we should have had more time to discuss this bill, more time to put forward ideas to improve a good proposition, but a proposition that lacks structure and substance. We will support this bill, not because it will do anything beneficial to the business climate in Ontario, but because it is absolutely needed for us to create these jobs, so that we can actually move forward.

I want to close my comments by talking about a particular cluster that we've had in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin, in particular in the community of Chapleau, where there was a—unfortunately, he's no longer with us. His name is Bill Ivey. The man introduced me to the field of engineering. It was through my discussions with him while he was working at a steam plant up in White River that I had the pleasure of making his acquaintance, seeing his vision and actually working with him to enhance his business.

He relocated from White River to Chapleau, and while he lived in Chapleau he made an acquaintance with a local businessman, a man by the name of Larry Lacroix, along with the local mayor at the time, which was André Byham. They had looked at an exact cluster of what they were doing. I wish I had more time to discuss this, so that I could give you the length of time that they spent identifying the potential for this cluster. It involved biomass energy, new generation, new forestry projects, building houses and First Nations opportunities. It involved jobs, it involved jobs and it involved jobs, and it was there, available, at their grasp.

When I sat with them, and when I first discussed their project, I couldn't believe how they were given the roller-coaster ride in how they were introducing their cluster. So I said, “Do you know what? With a fresh set of eyes, I'm going to start this process over.”

I don't have much time left, Mr. Speaker, and that's unfortunate. That's the problem with time allocation: I

don't have the voice or the time to speak on behalf of the people in my riding. But this whole initiative started in 2007. I got involved with it in late 2011, and to this day they're still struggling to move that project forward.

Mr. Speaker, again, I'm frustrated. Thank you for giving me the amount of time that you have given me, but this is the frustrating part of having time allocation on bills: You don't have a chance to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate. The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Just on petition number P-56, on the Cornwall recreation and trout area: It's overdue, and I'm waiting for an answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member is waiting for an answer. Is the minister or the House leader available?

I would remind the House leader, or whoever is taking his place, that it has been mentioned and should be dealt with. Thank you.

Further debate? Further debate—last call.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You've been up once, thanks.

Pursuant to the order of the House of November 27, 2014, I'm now required to put the question.

Mr. Leal has moved third reading of Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no. 1720

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell.

I have a vote deferral, pursuant to standing order 28(h), that the vote on third reading of Bill 7 be deferred until Thursday, December 11, 2014, after question period.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Orders of the day? This has been a busy day.

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY
GENERATING FACILITIES
AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR
LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX,
DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES
ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Mr. Flynn, on behalf of Mr. Naqvi, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court

security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 35, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Our government is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all Ontarians, and the legislation I have just put on the floor is certainly a vital step in that direction. On October 30 this year, we reintroduced this legislation. It's going to repeal and replace the Public Works Protection Act.

Speaker, this is the third time the legislation has been introduced in the House. The act will repeal the outdated Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act to address court security, and also set out stand-alone legislation respecting security at electrical generating facilities and other critical infrastructure that is defined in the act.

With respect to the court security component, the bill is going to require any person who is entering or is inside a courthouse to identify themselves and provide information to the authorities so they can have their security risk assessed. With respect to court security, it also allows search without warrant of any person or vehicle that is entering the premises.

With respect to electricity generating and our nuclear facilities, this bill will require any person who wishes to enter or is on the premises to produce identification and provide information for the purpose of assessing that person's security risk.

We have consulted with civil liberties advocates to be sure that the appropriate balance has been struck between the security of our people and civil liberty of our society. Speaker, it's time to get this bill passed. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

The member from—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Renfrew—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller):—Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You certainly remember the riding when you're calling me to order, Speaker. I guess it's a different circumstance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member is very special.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm sure I am, in your eyes.

This is about the fifth or so time that I have had a chance to speak to this bill in the three different times it was introduced. The first time, I was the critic for community safety and correctional services. The second time, I was a member of the Legislature, as I am still today. And today, I'm speaking as a person who sat on the committee as this bill was brought to this place for third reading. So I've had the opportunity to see this bill from every angle, upside down and sideways, and I share the view of the Minister of Labour—I'm sure we'll hear

from the parliamentary assistant, as well, on this bill. I don't often say this, but I think we've got it about right. I don't often say that about a government bill, but I think they've got this about right.

Now, as I say, the first time this bill was introduced in the Legislature was back in 2012, and Ms. Meilleur, the Attorney General today, was Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. I'll say that we worked pretty closely on the bill, because there were a lot of amendments to the bill, and the government, to their credit, did—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Incorporate.

Mr. John Yakabuski:—incorporate—thank you very much, Bas—most of those amendments into the bill.

So when we brought it back this time—of course, it came back in the Parliament before that, but then, with the election, it died on the order paper in the Parliament before this one. But in this Parliament, we did have some more input from stakeholders, and it seems that you're going to have some stakeholders who aren't happy with the bill.

But at the same time, those provisions that we've incorporated into the bill, I think, strike the right balance between the protection of the public and the individual rights and freedoms of people. Whenever you're protecting people, in my opinion, it is a fair trade-off to relinquish some of your own individual rights for the safety of others. The bill does just about get it right.

What I wish I was talking about today is not Bill 35, because we're going to vote for this bill tomorrow. After question period, there will be a deferred vote on this bill. We're going to vote in favour of it, because we believe it's right. But what I really would have liked to have been talking about in debate today—we should have been having a special debate on the Auditor General's report, because I think that's the issue that the people in Ontario would really like to sink their teeth into.

Yes, we did have a little bit of an exchange during question period today. Where's the report? I don't have it with me. Yes, it's a big one—what, 500-and-some pages?

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's like the Eaton's catalogue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, it's like the old Eaton's catalogue. You know, the poor people up in my area, like me—we used to have to use these for shin pads playing hockey. Oh my goodness, 595 pages. She's a pretty big report, and there's not a whole lot of good said about the Liberal government in this report. There weren't a whole lot of kudos for the government in this report.

In fact, it prompted the government—members of the government, members of the cabinet, members of the executive council—to actually question the competence of our Auditor General. Now, that takes you down, in my opinion, a very slippery slope, because the people of Ontario have to have confidence that the report of the Auditor General is, in fact—you know, when you get your taxes done, and if you have your taxes done at an accounting firm, you get the audited version. Once you get the audited version, that is like, “Okay, the stamp is on that of the top dog.” It has been approved by the top level—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I've been rather nice. The member is drifting. Let's stick to the bill a little bit.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Certainly. Thank you very much.

Bill 35 repeals the Public Works Protection Act. Well, if you want to talk about protection, nobody is protecting the taxpayer of Ontario on that side of the House, but the auditor—that's her job: to protect the taxpayer. So it is all about protection.

But I realize that I'm running out of time here, and I'm going to pass the floor on to my colleagues, because we're going to vote for Bill 35. But we should have a special debate in this House on the auditor's report so we can hold this government properly to account before they recess for Christmas and hope that everybody has forgotten about it after Family Day.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Very impressive. Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm not even going to try to follow that act, Speaker, but it is entertaining at such a late hour of the day.

Thank you very much, Speaker. It is, of course, an honour to rise in this chamber to speak on behalf of my constituents and my riding about the bill before us right now. It's Bill 35, the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act. It is one that I have had the honour to speak about and speak to about a year or maybe a year and a half ago in its previous incarnation, one that was introduced by the then minister of corrections and community safety, Madame Meilleur.

At that time it had some serious flaws that New Democrats on this side of this House were concerned about—serious questions around the infringement of civil liberties that we were concerned about. We now continue to be concerned about some of those provisions built into the bill, and I will attempt to outline them for the pleasure of the House, as everyone is certainly attentive, listening to every word that I say.

1730

While they sign their Christmas cards, I want to wish everybody a merry Christmas, certainly, because I don't think I'll get a chance to do that. I know it's an important thing to do this late in the day in our sitting.

Speaker, Bill 35 contains three schedules that would (1) repeal the Public Works Protection Act, (2) amend the Police Services Act in relation to court security, and (3) enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act. Let me explain what those mechanisms do.

Bill 35: Of course, the first provision, the first schedule, repealing the Public Works Protection Act—something that New Democrats absolutely agree with; something that was outlined and highlighted in Justice McMurtry's report; something that we believe should be done, needs to be done and can be done through the provisions of this bill; something that we certainly support.

The need to remove the Public Works Protection Act, an act that was first initiated in, I believe, 1936, if I'm not mistaken—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —1933, somebody is telling me. It was brought in, I assume, to ensure the safety and security of our public spaces, whether they be courts or hydro generating facilities or even our very own Legislature here. Certainly, Speaker, we understand the nature and the need to provide security and safety for not only those who work in our public spaces but also those who visit our public spaces. However, there has to be a balance struck between the need for and the provisions of safety and the need to keep our spaces open and accessible to the public. They are fundamental in our democratic system: the ability for people to avail themselves of the process, to come and visit us, to visit our courts, to visit the Legislature and to see what happens, and to hold us accountable, really.

The need to remove the Public Works Protection Act and replace it with something else was born out of the G20 fiasco, really, that happened here in Toronto, where members of society from all walks gathered to protest the G20 summit that was held here in Toronto and other parts of Ontario. They were here to protest in a peaceful way. They were here to express their democratic right to assemble and to voice their opinion on what governments around the world were doing, whether it be trade agreements or human rights or environmental policies. It is, of course, their right, and as is the history of various G20, G7, G8 summits, there is always public protest; there is always dissent on what's happening. So it certainly was anticipated by levels of government, both provincial and federal, and certainly municipal, that there would be a need for a security presence.

However, this government of the day, under then-Premier—what's his name, again? I forget. He has been gone so—

Interjection: McGuinty.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Dalton McGuinty. Man, we miss him. We miss him. Don't we miss him around here?

In the dark hours of the evening, he brought in provisions of the then Public Works Protection Act that infringed on the civil liberties of those protesters in such a way that it has been referred to—and, Speaker, these aren't my words—as one of the worst civil rights violations in the history of Ontario, in the history of this province, where over 1,000 people were rounded up, “kettled”—that was a new word that we learned during the G20 protests. They were kettling peaceful protesters, rounding them up, holding them for three days, sometimes, without laying charges—these extreme, extraordinary powers that were given to police to, really, infringe on what should be a normal, democratic, peaceful process. Various human rights experts and civil liberties experts have denounced the actions of this government at that time. It has been referred to as a black mark on civil liberties that I hope will never be replayed. However, the government has, to date, still not

apologized for using those extraordinary powers—really, war measures—to infringe on those actions.

Speaker, we heard of people who weren't even a part of the protest, were not even within an assembly, who weren't on the street, who were just watching, who were rounded up and held without charge. We heard of people who were amputees who required prosthetics and having their prosthetics taken away from them—not charged but taken and held without charge and denied the prosthetic limbs they required—a massive infringement on civil liberties and peaceful democratic protesting.

Speaker, I can tell you from personal experience, as somebody who has grown up, thankfully, within the labour movement, that I've been part of a lot of protests—good ones. As a young kid, 12 years old, my parents put me on the bus to Ottawa to protest the GATT, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. I hopped on a bus all by myself with a bunch of local farmers and auto workers—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes—and went to Ottawa and protested the GATT. It was where I cut my teeth in terms of political action, and was something that I think was formative in my political career.

Imagine that. Imagine what we would be doing to the dissent with this message that we're sending to young activists out there. Is this what the government is attempting to do, to say, “Don't even bother assembling and protesting because we're going to crack down hard on you. We're going to be able to infringe on your rights, hold you without charge. We're going to be able to search your vehicle without warrant. We're going to ask you a whole bunch of questions about who you are, why you're there, without any reasonable requirement?” “Without any reasonable grounds” is the official legal term.

I heard from the official opposition that they're in full support of these new measures that are going to be brought in under G35, which will specifically act and be targeted at our courts and our electricity generating facilities—two very different entities within our province. Let me try to expand on that.

Our colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton is our lead on the G35 bill, and he explained the difference between the nature of the public court system, the invaluable aspect that they are in terms of being accountable as our judicial branch and having to be accessible for them to be really fully functioning in a functioning democracy. People need to be able to go, see court proceedings, understand that the process is working correctly, and not feel as though that isn't a space for them to play a role.

What G35 does is, it gives new powers to court security to identify or question the intent, the reasoning, the rationale, the persona of that person going into the court prior to them entering: “Who are you? Why are you here? What do you do? What's your political affiliation?” They can really ask them anything, any question they want. What does that do? What type of message does that

send to those who want to play an active role in our functioning democracy? That they're no longer welcome? That you will be guilty until presumed innocent? That, without reasonable grounds, we can in fact question your actions?

Certainly, I understand, and New Democrats understand, the need to provide security and safety to Ontarians. I actually believe it is our fundamental role here. Aside from everything else we do, we have to ensure the protection of people in our province. Whether that's road safety, health and safety in the workplace, food safety—all measures, all mechanisms—that is our first and foremost goal, and I hope that is a priority on behalf of the government. However, there has to be a balance between providing the safety and security of people and ensuring that civil liberties are respected and human rights are respected.

We on this side believe that the government fails to make that balance. Don't take it from me, Speaker; take it from Justice McMurtry, who certainly agreed that the Public Works Protection Act should be removed, but not replaced with something that goes even further in terms of inhibiting civil action, inhibiting people's participation in our public spaces. We understand, of course, the reasonable nature of ensuring that there aren't weapons taken into our courts. That makes sense to us, and I think it would make sense to any reasonable person. Let's ensure that there are no weapons, no bombs, certainly nothing that could harm anyone else in our public spaces. But to do that without reasonable grounds, to do that without warrant, I think, goes beyond what reasonable people would think.

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The government of Manitoba has dealt with court security specifically. The Court Security Act was, in fact, tested by the Supreme Court: very progressive. It didn't infringe on civil liberties as we see that Bill 35 does. It actually ensured that the public was protected. It ensured that there were reasonable grounds that the police could act on and search individuals who posed a risk. However, it wasn't arbitrary. It was specific. Its prescription was, again, tested by the Supreme Court and found to be valid.

Getting back to the G20, you would wonder why a government that purports to be progressive would act in such a way to its own citizens, would be so aggressive towards its own citizens gathering in peaceful protest. We know that within the melee, within the chaos that was the G20 protests—and certainly it got violent. There were definitely people who broke the law and most likely deserved to be charged and ultimately, potentially, punished. However, we know now, after the fact, that there were agents provocateurs—

Interjection: Agents—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Agents provocateurs. That is a reference to folks who are in the police forces who would have been dressed up as protesters and played a role, potentially, in provoquer—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Provoking.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —provoking, merci; I get my français mixed up—provoking, potentially, civil unrest.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Provocateur.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: “Provocateur” is not the word I was looking for.

But how do we deal with that? How did this government deal with that? They understood that that was out there. They understood that these were actions on the policing side. However, they went after those peaceful protesters en masse without regard, without identifying or qualifying those who were actually the real offenders. It's something that I think sends a chill to those who have put their life's work on the line in terms of being a part of the peaceful process and being activists.

Are we no longer able to assemble? Are we no longer able to provide public oversight in our court system? Is this reaching even further than what the Public Works Protection Act did?

So we have some fundamental problems with this bill, unquestionably, and ones that we haven't seen the government address, ones that they've heard not only from us as New Democrats but also from those experts in civil liberties and human rights: that to infuse a measure of confidence in our public system, to infuse a measure of accountability and oversight that is essential in a democratic process and society, the public has to play a vital role. They have to play an inclusive role. Putting more roadblocks in front of them actually being a part of it inhibits the entire process. What does it do fundamentally to our system? That's the question. That's the real, fundamental problem that we have with this legislation, one that we're not certain the government understands.

There's a third part of this that deals with the same provisions of security, search, seizure and access within our electricity generating facilities and nuclear facilities. I don't think anyone would argue that those aren't important public entities to protect, and they are currently already fiercely protected, and a lot of resources go into making sure that the perimeters aren't breached and that no one who shouldn't be there gets in. We definitely don't want nefarious actors around our generating facilities—including nuclear, for obvious reasons.

However, these are contentious entities in our various communities. Sometimes when a gas plant goes up in a community, a gas plant that's supposed to generate electricity, sometimes when they are proposed or built in a community, the public don't want them there.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No way.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yeah way. What's up with that? Sometimes when generating facilities go up in communities, the public don't want them, and they actually gather and protest the building of these facilities, or the costs, God forbid. Sometimes that happens, and we have to ensure that their voices are heard. Sometimes that means them being there, near, close to those facilities, with signs, with placards, saying, potentially, “Don't waste our money. Stop wasting our money, please.” Who knows?

This bill certainly gives security forces, whether they be peace officers, police officers or private security firms, new powers to search and seize without warrant.

That's pretty extreme. That's something that I think would send a chill in communities like Oakville and Mississauga if they were to have a power plant slated for their communities, that they wouldn't be able to raise their voice; I don't know. But it's one that we raise as a part of the debate here that we believe the government hasn't considered fully.

We understand, of course, the need to provide those security measures; it's one that is reasonable within our civil society. We understand the need to balance the protection of those facilities, but when it comes to granting those powers to security forces that may not be up to the same standard of training as our police and peace forces and allowing them, by regulation, these new provisions—even stakeholders such as OPSEU, who represent those security forces in our generating facilities are not in agreement with expanding these types of powers. OPSEU president Smokey Thomas presented a survey of his members around court security which rejected limits placed on public access to courts, as proposed in Bill 35, as well as generating facilities.

I think it's quite clear that New Democrats continue to have some serious reservations around Bill 35. We understand that it is born out of the failure and aggressive actions taken on behalf of the government in relation to G20. It's born out of a black mark that should continue to haunt the Liberal government and their actions around peaceful protest in Toronto. We see them as going way too far in finding a balance. To withdraw the Public Works Protection Act should have been enough, could have been enough. Replacing it with something that we see as being far too encroaching on civil liberties I don't think will have the desired effect, and I think it certainly can send a chill through all those who believe and stand up for peaceful democratic process and protest in our country and in the province.

I thank you very much, Speaker, for the time you've given me today. I cede my time to my colleagues who are going to speak to this bill as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm pleased to join this debate as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

A few weeks ago, our government demonstrated commitment to protecting our critical infrastructure like electricity generating stations, nuclear facilities and courthouses in a way that would also ensure that our civil liberties are safeguarded.

That is why it's truly a pleasure to rise in this House for the third reading of the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014. The act, if passed, will repeal and replace the Public Works Protection Act, PWA, ensuring we strike the right balance between protecting Ontario courthouses, electricity generating plants and nuclear facilities, and respecting the civil rights of the people of this province.

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Our government agrees with those concerned that the PWPA, which was passed 75 years ago, was too vague

and had outlived its usefulness. That is why the government asked the Honourable Roy McMurtry, a former chief justice, to review that particular legislation. This legislation builds on the recommendations from Justice McMurtry and incorporates many of the recommendations made from stakeholders and, importantly, opposition members.

The bill is about protecting the safety of individuals while also protecting individual rights. It achieves the necessary and delicate balance between protecting our communities and protecting our civil rights, and has led to a broad consensus among all our partners.

We sought input and advice from nuclear operators and regulators, electricity producers, justice partners and municipalities. We also consulted with civil liberties advocates to be sure that the appropriate balance was struck between security and civil liberty. MPPs from all three parties already had an opportunity to speak on this proposed legislation when the bill came forward in the previous House; 16 amendments put forward by the opposition have been incorporated into this particular piece of legislation.

I want to thank the civil liberties organizations, public safety experts, community associations and all Ontarians who provided advice and feedback on this piece of legislation. We value their input and thank them for their continued efforts in speaking on such an important issue. Much of this feedback is reflected in this legislation, and we look forward to hopefully continuing to work together during the implementation of the bill and the regulations that may follow. The results of this process show that from our productive conversation and constructive dialogue comes real action to protect Ontarians.

During the debate and the committee process, we heard that everyone should have access to our courts. We totally agree. This bill does not impede an individual's access to our courts. This bill will maintain the legislative framework that relates to court security that has been in existence in Ontario for the past 75 years.

In his report, Chief Justice McMurtry recommended that the provisions related to court security in the old legislation must be maintained in the new legislation. As Justice McMurtry emphasized, there is an ongoing need for searches at our courthouses. That is why the Police Services Act would be amended to maintain existing security measures at courthouses, ensuring both the safety and the accessibility of our courthouses. That means that the framework for court security, based on the principle of reasonableness—I say that again, Mr. Speaker: based on the principle of reasonableness—and with an overarching view of maintaining the openness in place today, will be in place tomorrow.

Currently, any officer may require a person who enters the court to provide identification. Currently, an officer may require a person who enters a court to provide information for the purpose of assessing any security risk. That is the system that would be in place if this bill passes. These provisions are permissive. The individual has the right to walk away.

If court security is not in a position to determine the identity of individuals attending the courthouse, the potential for violence may increase. The powers afforded in this bill are not arbitrary. The provisions must be read in the context of reasonableness. I wanted to make sure that it was very clear what this legislation does and does not do.

It is also important to note that the proposed legislation also limits the types of essential public infrastructure that it covers to prescribed electricity generating and nuclear facilities. Adding other categories of infrastructure would require amendments to the act, not just a new regulation. It would therefore be open to debate in this House. The process for changing an act is very transparent and open, and the content of any proposed amendments would be subject to public debate.

There is also one important aspect of the PWPA that we have not replicated. The PWPA gives guards the authority to exercise their powers in the approaches to a public work. The “approach” to a facility was a concern for Mr. McMurtry and civil liberties groups because it is vague and very hard to define. We listened to those concerns and we acted. This proposed bill would outline specified powers for guards that can only be used on the premises. These powers would not apply off the premises. Since the approach falls outside the premises of the nuclear facility, any security issues should be addressed in partnership with the police of the particular jurisdiction.

Our government recognizes and echoes Ontarians’ value and celebration of human and civil rights.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility to Ontarians to ensure that our courts and critical infrastructure are protected. We have an equally great responsibility to protect and strengthen their civil liberties, like the freedom of assembly, and the principles of an open and transparent justice system. I believe that this legislation does indeed strike that necessary balance.

We heard from our partners, we heard from our civil liberty groups, we heard from our community safety partners, and we heard from the opposition. Now is the time to act, and I urge all members of this House to support this important legislation.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues in the third party disagree with some of the identification issues in our court system, but I want to share with you: I had several gangs operating in my riding when I first got elected. To have the trial for those members who were arrested by the police, we actually had to build a brand new court because the regular courthouse was not secure enough. So I disagree with them.

There are certain instances that you will have to secure our courthouses, and this legislation provides for that.

I know the member spoke very passionately, but I totally disagree with him.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have prepared 10 minutes. Clearly, I don’t have that much time, so I will just—

Interjection.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: You won’t hold it against me. Thank you.

I’m just going to speak to the piece from the previous speaker, who was talking about the numerous people that the government has consulted with on this bill. I find it ironic that they would speak about consultation when in fact they time-allocated the bill in order to stifle the debate and silence the people we represent on this side of the House.

The people I represent have concerns about entering courthouses and being searched by untrained security. If I take somebody to court, just because I’ve taken them to court, now I’m subject to having my vehicle searched—

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I hate to interrupt the speaker, but—notwithstanding standing order 6 and the order of the House earlier today, the House shall continue to meet past 6 p.m. until completion of the debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 35, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister is seeking unanimous consent on his request.

Is there unanimous consent? Carried.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You have to move it.

Boy, what a day this has been.

Well, I can’t read the writing, so—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That’s your writing.

I think, notwithstanding standing order 6 and the order of the House earlier today, the House shall continue to meet past 6 p.m. until completion of the debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 35, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion. Agreed? Okay.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sorry? Was there a no?

Interjections.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All right. It’s now 6 o’clock. This House stands recessed until 6:45 p.m.

The House recessed from 1800 to 1845.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
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Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
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Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
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Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
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McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
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Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
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Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
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Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Mercredi 10 décembre 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 10 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 10 décembre 2014

The House recessed from 1800 to 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITIES AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 10, 2014, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / *Projet de loi 35, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated Bill 35, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh had the floor—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Sorry; Windsor West. I apologize.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No, it was Windsor West.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Got it. Sorry. I've just been corrected. I apologize. The member for Windsor West had the floor, and now I'll call for further debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise not with great pleasure in this particular debate, because I think, if you really look at where this government has come from for the last little while since they've got back to their majority government, the government has time-allocated absolutely every piece of legislation through this House. That is, quite frankly, not, I think, in keeping with what has to happen in this place.

Let me just put it this way: The government House leader came to the opposition House leaders and said that he wanted to make an agreement with members of the opposition to be able to move the agenda through the House that was important to members of this assembly.

And—I'm just going to wait here, because it looks like you're going to do a ruling on something here. Is there something going on that I'm missing?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay. All right. Thank you very much.

The government House leader came to the opposition House leaders and said, "I want to be able to find a way so that we can get our agenda through the House." The government—and this is a time-allocated debate, so I'm speaking to the issue overall—said that they had four bills that they wanted to be able to put through the House. Of those four bills that they were going to put through the House, we said to them—the Conservative House leader and myself as the New Democratic House leader—that we need to be able to look at trying to find a way to allow the government to get their way at the end of the day, because we understand as the opposition that the government has the right and the government has a responsibility to be able to get its agenda through the House. But the opposition also has the right and responsibility to scrutinize what the government puts forward. So we said, "Let us go away and let us talk to our people about what could look like a possible agreement to allow the government to get these four bills forward."

We came back, and the Conservatives—under the Conservative House leader and the Conservative whip, who were at these meetings—said, "We're fine with that. We're prepared to give you those bills, but we want some time in committee to be able to have the public have their say," as did we New Democrats.

The government then changed the game—the government House leader—and said, "Well, it's no longer four bills. We have five." Then, when we got on to talking about five bills, he said, "It's no longer five. We're at six." Then he said, "It's no longer six. We're talking seven."

So what are you to draw from the conclusion of where the government was coming from? The government never intended to try to make this House work in the way it should. The government decided on what it wanted at the beginning, and whatever it is, at the end of the day, that they wanted, they were going to get it by way of time allocation.

I will only say this in this debate tonight: That's not the way that this place should actually work. That's not the way that this—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There is really great parliamentary debate going on from the benches on the other side.

That's not the way that this place is actually supposed to function. When the government House leader comes to

the opposition and says, "I'm prepared to listen to you about how we're able to get my agenda through the House and what is needed to make a deal," the opposition has a responsibility, which we took, to be able to find a way forward. We offered the government a way forward. I accept that the government didn't like that particular offer, the counter-offer that the opposition put forward, but that's a starting position, as is the starting position from the government.

So where do we end up at the end of all of this? The government essentially decides that it's going to time-allocate absolutely everything through the House, and was never serious about talking to the opposition about how they can move their agenda forward.

You have to draw a couple of conclusions. The first conclusion is: Was the government actually sincere in its outreach to the opposition to be able to deal with these particular bills?

1850

Ms. Catherine Fife: No.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have to conclude, as the member from Kitchener—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Waterloo.

Mr. Gilles Bisson:—Kitchener–Waterloo says, "No." At the end of the day, the government decided on a strategy before they came to meet with the House leaders for the first time. They decided, "We're going to get what we want through this House the way we want because we're the government. We're a majority and we have the God-inherent right to do what we want." They essentially knew they were going to do time allocation from the beginning.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's bargaining in bad faith.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member from Kitchener–Waterloo is absolutely right: This is bargaining in bad faith. If I was to do that at the bargaining table as an employer or as a union at the bargaining table, I would be found in contravention of the Ontario Labour Relations Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member to bring his comments back to Bill 35—if he would tie his comments back to Bill 35.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I will say to you that this is all about Bill 35 and about the process that this bill has seen coming through the House. This is a time-allocated debate, and I'm speaking to the process by which we get to where we are now, which is perfectly within my right.

The second point I will make is this: The first point was that the government never intended to move forward with a way to bring the opposition into a discussion about how they move the agenda forward. Both the Conservative House leader and the Conservative whip, the NDP whip and the NDP House leader—myself—said, "We accept that you're the government. You won the election. The people of Ontario have spoken. You have not only the right; you have an obligation to be able to govern." We understand that. But so do we as the opposition have the right to hold this government to account. What this

government seems to forget is, they just don't have an unfettered right to do what they want. There should be a process respected that allows the opposition to have its say. We wouldn't have stopped their legislation, but we would have allowed transparency.

The second point is: If we're not here to serve the public of Ontario, what are we here to do? Committee is not about me, Speaker. Committee is not about the House leader of the Conservative Party. It's not about the whip of the Conservative Party or the whip of the NDP. Committee is about giving the public the right to have its say. What we, as an opposition, were saying was: Allow the public to have its say.

The public are participating in elections less and less every day. Why? Because they have lost confidence in politicians and their ability to hold their promises and to do the things that are right for the public. If we, as a Legislature, servants of the people, are not able to respect that in the end the public has an ability and a right to have their say on bills through the committee process, then what is this all about?

I think the only people who really have been dealt out of this are—not the opposition because we get less time to debate. Listen, I get time to debate on all kinds of things in the House, along with my caucus and along with the Conservative caucus. It's not an issue of how much time I get. That's not the important issue here. It's not how much time I'm going to get in committee to wax eloquent on whatever is going on when it comes to amendments. That's not really the issue. The issue is the public. The public has a right to appear before committees to be able to say to a government, "You're right. You're wrong. Here's where I want to praise. This is where I want to criticize. Here is what I'd like to have changed." The government didn't allow the public to have their say. If the public is not participating in our elections, this is part of the reason why.

The last point I will make is this, because I know the whip for the—

Mr. John Vanthof: No, you can keep going.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I think the whip wants to say a few words.

The last point I will make is this: This is really a failure, this whole agenda this fall—being able to move through the House the agenda of the government is really a failure on the part of the government to manage.

The government started this process in saying that they wanted four bills. Did they know they wanted eight in the end? I think it was a moving target. I think that's fair to say.

In the end, the Premier's office, or, as we call it, the corner office over there—her and her staff—failed to give direction to their House leader about what it is that they wanted, and it didn't allow the House leader to do his job. I think it's a failure on the part of the ability of the Liberals to manage that we found ourselves in time allocation this fall and we find ourselves in debate here tonight. I'm going to hear some very interesting—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I think it's important to allow the member to express an opinion that he feels very strongly on. The government was not interrupting him on it until he got to the point of imputing a motive that is certainly contrary to standing order 23(h). I don't mind if he wants to stray a little bit, but I think he needs to avoid violating that particular standing order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I don't find that the member for Timmins–James Bay is in contravention of standing order 23, but I would ask him again that it would be helpful if he would bring his comments back to Bill 35 and make sure that his remarks are relevant to the debate on Bill 35.

The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll only say again that this is a time-allocated debate. The motion and the bill are connected. So I'm speaking to the process, and I believe that at the end of the day, I have the right to speak to what is going on.

My point was that the government has the right to manage and the government has the right to get its agenda through the House. Nobody argues that. The parliamentary principle in this place is: Government governs; they have the ability to get their stuff through the House. Nobody argues that. But in the end, it's a failure on the part of the government to—

Mr. Grant Crack: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Sit down, Crack.

Mr. Grant Crack: Speaker, the member from Kitchener–Waterloo just told me to sit down, so I'm just going to ask the Speaker: Do I have the privilege to be able to stand in this House?

Interjection.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Speaker.

We're dealing with Bill 35, which is the Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act third reading debate. I haven't heard mention from the member from Timmins–James Bay of anything related to the bill at this point. I believe you've ruled on it twice, and I would suspect—I think his time should be up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Actually, I didn't rule on it. I asked him to bring his remarks back to Bill 35, which he has done each time I've asked him. Obviously, there's a sensitivity in the House, and I would ask the member again to ensure that his comments are relevant to Bill 35.

I recognize the member. He's got the floor.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to say, "Bill 35, time allocation," five times. I've said it now, so I'm to the point. But the fact that the government can't listen to six minutes of debate—because that's all we've got left on the clock—about the process that they've put this House through says volumes. It's the arrogance of this government to not allow the parliamentary process to function.

We need to understand, members, that Parliament has been developed over a period of centuries in order to have

a check and balance against the right of the crown—or in this case, cabinet—and the right of the opposition to be able to do their jobs. The fact that the government is not prepared to listen to six minutes of debate on the process says to me volumes about where they're at.

I was about to end, but I've got five minutes, so I'm going to take it. I'm just going to say this: It's a sad—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Could you say something nice about the Conservatives while you're up there?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, not today, Mr. Yakabuski. Not today. I will not say anything good about—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no.

My point is this: I just—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Just one thing?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I like you, Yak. You're a good guy.

Interjection: That's good.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll stop at that point.

My point is this: This Legislature is not about the government being able to do just what it wants; this Legislature is not about the opposition being able to hold the government hostage to anything; this Legislature is about—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Mr. Speaker, a point of order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to recognize the member for Beaches–East York. He's got a point of order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm sorry. My apologies. No, really, this is a debate about Bill 35, and not about time allocation and what this government wants to do with time allocation. It's about Bill 35, Mr. Speaker, and the member knows. He's disrespecting you, he's disrespecting—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): No, he's not disrespecting me.

The member for Timmins–James Bay has the floor.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to finish, in the four minutes and 19 seconds I've got left. If the government is not prepared to listen to criticism from the opposition about the process, then I think we're in deep trouble.

This Legislature is about the people of Ontario. I'm not standing on a high horse when I say that, because I listen to my good friend the member from St. Catharines, who has been here much longer than I, who has given these speeches in this Legislature before.

We are here to do the bidding of the people of Ontario, and we need to respect them in this process. The point that I'm making as the NDP House leader, and the point that I think the Conservative House leader made, is that, yes, at times we will be critical of what the government is doing, and of course you're going to be very much praising what you do as a government. But in the end, the legislative process is that there needs to be an opportunity for the public to have its say, and what the government has done by way of this process is to deal the public out.

1900

I only hope, as we move forward into the new session, when we get back here in February, that the government will reflect on what's happened here this fall. We have

not had an opportunity to deal the public in. I just believe, as a member and as a citizen of this province, that we need to respect the people who sent us here. The public has to have the right to have their say.

So I say in regard to Bill 35, Speaker, that the government has put forward a bill to which some of the measures, I think, some of us could support. I think there are some things within Bill 35 that the government—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm being constantly heckled by the member behind me—

Mr. Steve Clark: You're being heckled by your own member.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Which is really funny, actually. But I'm just saying that there are points to this bill that are points that I think are real debate about what rights the government should have and the police should have when it comes to court security, and what are the rights that—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Then you should debate those points.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: They just don't get it.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Twenty minutes of procedural nonsense.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The really sad part is—and nonsense is what I'm hearing from the other side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York will come to order.

The member for Timmins–James Bay has two minutes left in his remarks. I recognize the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My Lord. They wanted night sittings, and they can't even take eight minutes. It's really—it's bizarre. It's like Twilight Zone kind of stuff. The government moved the motion to sit at night for us to be able to deal with this bill, and they can't deal with 16 minutes of debate that they're uncomfortable with. Well, I'm sorry. That's what democracy is all about. It's about you being held to account. At the end of the day, you have to listen to what the opposition says and decide if you're going this way or the other way. The member for Beaches–East York can continue doing the things that he's doing, but he's not doing a disservice to anybody but, I think, the people of this province.

I accept, as an opposition member, that the government has a right to govern. I only ask that the government accept that the opposition has a right to keep the government accountable. That's what this Legislature is all about. The government gets their bills, but we get to be able to hold them to scrutiny. In the end, the public has a say in that whole process, and the only place by which they can do that is within the committee structure of this Legislature.

I think it is a really sad day in this province when the government backbenchers—and I say backbenchers, because the members of cabinet kind of understand what's going on tonight, because they've been around here a while. They understand that, quite frankly, that's what this place is all about. If we allow ourselves, as a Legislature, not to respect the public, I think it is, quite frankly, a sad state of democracy within the province of Ontario.

I would just ask the government, at 20-some-odd seconds that I've got left and that they're heckling, that they should reflect on what happened here this fall. Go and have a merry Christmas, and I wish you all a great holiday season. Think about how this Legislature can—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Timmins–James Bay, I'll give you a few extra seconds.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate on Bill 35?

Pursuant to the order of the House of December 3, 2014, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Flynn has moved third reading of Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell—unless I receive a deferral notice from the chief government whip.

I am pleased to inform the House that I have received a deferral notice from the chief government whip. This will be deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Orders of the day. I recognize the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade.

Hon. Michael Chan: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried—

Mr. John Yakabuski: On division.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): —on division.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1905.

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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 11 December 2014

Jeudi 11 décembre 2014



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 11 December 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 11 décembre 2014

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Orders of the day?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, thank you. I'm not sure whether I should ask for orders of the day or unanimous consent for the Speaker to wear his Santa hat.

Orders of the day: Government notice of motion number 15.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I move that, on the occasion of the upcoming bicentennial of his birth, this House commemorates the contribution to Canada of its founding father and first Prime Minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Forgive my interruption. It needs to be moved by a minister. Could you please make that arrangement quickly?

The Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I move that on the occasion of the upcoming bicentennial of his birth, this House commemorates the contribution to Canada of its founding father and first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald.

Hon. Liz Sandals: On a point of order, Speaker: I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent that the time available to 10:15 this morning be allotted to the debate on this motion, divided equally among the three recognized parties, and that a recorded vote on the motion be taken at deferred votes following question period today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will recognize the Minister of Education on her motion. Do we agree? Carried.

Minister Gravelle.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you very much. I would ask for agreement that our remarks be delivered on our behalf by the member for Kingston and the Islands.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Kingston and the Islands.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: As the member for Kingston and the Islands, it is a particular honour to join my colleagues from all sides in considering the life and legacy of Sir John A. Macdonald. Thank you to all three House leaders

for unanimously agreeing to this important debate, and thank you to Arthur Milnes for suggesting the idea.

With the bicentennial of Sir John A. Macdonald's birth only a few weeks away, on January 11, it is fitting that we pause today to reflect on his considerable contributions to our province and our country.

In Kingston, Sir John A. was a skilled community builder, but that is not where the story starts. Sir John A. called Kingston his home from the age of five, having emigrated from Scotland. Leaving school at age 15, as he did, was common to all but the very wealthy in those days.

After serving as an apprentice lawyer for some years, Macdonald was called to the bar in 1836 and continued to practise in Kingston, seeking to establish his name through taking high-profile cases and through his involvement with numerous local organizations.

In 1843, he celebrated his first election victory when he ran as an alderman in Kingston's fourth ward. Hot on the heels of that, he was elected to the Legislature as a Conservative candidate in 1844.

It is alleged that he was not fond of oratory—I can relate—and relied heavily on supplying voters with large quantities of alcohol to gain popularity. It's true, it's true; it's in Wikipedia.

It was not until 1854, with the fall of the Grits, that Macdonald's talent for consensus-building came to the fore. In that year, he was largely responsible for putting together the first coalition government, known as the Liberal-Conservatives, where he served as Attorney General.

Now to fast-forward to 1867 and Confederation: In Sir John A.'s early career, the seat of government of the newly merged province of Canada had moved from Kingston to Montreal to Quebec City to Ottawa in the space of just 17 years. Macdonald had already been Premier for some time, and had witnessed or presided over a time of great Canadian prosperity and a time when Canadians had started to become one community connected by the telegraph and great railroads.

In 1867, as one of the prime architects of Confederation, his incredible talent for consensus-building was recognized in his knighthood and appointment as Canada's first Prime Minister on July 1 of that year.

In the following years, he was to serve in six majority governments. No leader in Canadian history won more. He was our Prime Minister for 19 years, a feat bettered only by Mackenzie King.

Sir John A.'s immense talents are not easy to sum up in a few short sentences, but I will attempt it now. Firstly,

he was passionate about his work, strong-willed and ambitious, but shrewd enough to know when to wait and be patient—something we don't always do today, I might add. He was pragmatic and exceedingly adaptable—his enemies called that “shifty”—and he possessed the rare quality of being able to gain the trust of highly antagonistic factions. He used that trust to promote the rewards of serving the greater good of the nation.

Underreported is Sir John A.'s compassionate side, perhaps born of witnessing the tragic murder of his younger brother by a drunken babysitter when Macdonald was just seven years old. Indeed, much of his personal life was laced with challenges or tragedy: the death of his first son, the lingering illness of his first wife and the estrangement of his remaining son after her passing. Finally, nothing reveals his loving nature more than his relationship with Mary, his daughter. Her deformity and debilitating mental and physical disease were extremely challenging, yet he doted on her.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, there are no heroes, Macdonald included, in the story of Canada's treatment of aboriginal peoples. While it is always a mistake to measure historical figures by the standards of the present day, Sir John A.'s legacy with regard to Indian affairs remains complex and contradictory. In fact, measured against the pronouncements of his contemporaries in governments of the day, Macdonald might be considered a moderate in many ways. His granting of the vote to qualified male Indians in 1885 lies in stark contrast to his crushing of the Métis rebellions and the subsequent hanging of Louis Riel in the same year.

0910

As Prime Minister, Sir John A. was resistant to the continual calls from colleagues and the opposition to reduce the government's interpretation and implementation of its treaty responsibilities. Rather than shy away from the darker chapters in our history, my community is seizing the opportunity to encourage scholarship and discussion with our Anishnawbe and Haudenosaunee friends whose land we share. At Queen's, for example, following in the footsteps of two full academic conferences, the Four Directions Aboriginal Student Centre just presented an impressive symposium where these issues were discussed freely.

Sir John A.'s impact in Kingston can still be seen and felt. He played a key role in the founding of Queen's University, particularly her world-renowned medical school. As a young alderman, he helped pave the way for the construction of our majestic city hall, which still serves that purpose today. Sir John A. would lie in state in that very building after his death on June 6, 1891. Both the proclamation of Upper Canada in 1792 and Macdonald's proclamation of Confederation in 1867 were made in Kingston's public market square. Yes, Canada was born in Kingston.

In short, Sir John A. Macdonald is synonymous with Kingston, and this is why the municipality, Queen's University, St. Lawrence College, the Royal Military College, the historical society, Tourism Kingston, both local school

boards, theatre groups and others have been planning Macdonald's bicentennial for years. Make no mistake: This will be a far-reaching and magnificent commemoration of our city's greatest son.

Here are some highlights:

—Dr. Terri-lynn Brennan, with both local school boards, has implemented a curriculum unit on Sir John A.'s life;

—A study of Sir John A. and Britain's Benjamin Disraeli at Queen's will be edited and translated by the project's brilliant director, Dr. Michel Pharand;

—Canada Transformed, a collection of Sir John A.'s major speeches, has just been published by our one and only Arthur Milnes, a Sir John A. authority, and Dr. Sarah Gibson;

—a debate between former Premier of this House Bob Rae and federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Chris Alexander, moderated by a friend to all members of this House, our very own Steve Paikin, of TVO;

—There will be free fireworks before the OHL's Kingston Frontenacs play a Macdonald bicentennial-themed home game;

—The Kingston Historical Society will be holding their annual Sir John A. Macdonald dinner with Kingston's Mr. Justice Thomas Cromwell of the Supreme Court of Canada;

—On bicentennial day, Mayor Paterson, whom we have in the gallery here, will address the citizens of Kingston at city hall for the city's official Sir John A. Macdonald bicentennial bash. Everyone is welcome. I encourage all members and their families to join us on that momentous day.

I must take this opportunity to thank Arthur Milnes, Sir John A. Macdonald bicentennial ambassador; Mayor Paterson and your officials; staff; and the small army who are putting their heart and soul into making these celebrations a success. Please visit the city of Kingston's website for further details on our Macdonald bicentennial plans for January and throughout 2015.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I want to reflect on one aspect of Macdonald's life and career that we have made a special point of highlighting in our bicentennial celebration. Sir John A. Macdonald, as we all are—unless we are of First Nations descent—was an immigrant to our shores. He went on to found and lead what has now become a respected G7 country, a country that was built around a collaboration of diverse cultures and viewpoints. The story of Sir John A. Macdonald demonstrates that in Kingston and Ontario and across our beloved country from sea to sea to sea, anything is possible. That is the greatest part of the legacy of a great man who we pay tribute to today.

Happy 200th birthday, Sir John A. Macdonald. Thank you. Merci. Meegwetch.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I will be splitting my time in today's special debate with the members for Leeds–Grenville and Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

On January 11, all across Ontario and from coast to coast to coast, Canadians will remember the incredible legacy of our first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald, born 200 years ago on that day in Scotland. Macdonald's family arrived in Canada when he was just five years old, and Canada would never be the same.

We gather today to celebrate the bicentennial of the birth of a truly exceptional man. They say that to understand where we came from, the roots of Canadian history and its politics, we must understand the life, career and accomplishments of John A. Macdonald.

It's not an easy task. Macdonald's character and achievements continue to fascinate historians, students and all Canadians who enrich themselves by exploring the life and legacy of one of Canada's proud founding fathers.

In his day, he had no political equal. He was an experienced statesman, lawyer, dedicated husband and father, and a far more colourful character than many would assume. He was also a natural and eloquent speaker and pragmatic coalition-builder, drawing people to his side through his words and speeches both inside Parliament and out.

Sir John A. Macdonald always believed in the incredible potential of our great country. Throughout the 1860s, he was a tireless advocate for the Confederation movement and even drafted the British North America Act, under which the four provinces were united on July 1, 1867.

One of the many colourful stories that I think speaks to the fascination we have for Sir John A.'s personality took place in December 1866, when he was in London to work out the final details of the BNA Act. He somehow set his hotel room on fire and burned his shoulder during the accident. Macdonald prudently kept the incident quiet and soldiered on.

I suspect he could hardly resist sharing the story immediately, because by all accounts he had a wicked sense of humour and would disarm people with his quick wit. He once stopped outside a cathedral during the 1878 election, where his local political opponent asked him if he was there to pray for success. John A. smiled and said, "There's a difference between our parties: We pray for the people, and you pray on the people." It's somewhat applicable today, Mr. Speaker. I won't say who is doing what, though.

We've all heard the story of him dismissing another political opponent who called him a drunk after he vomited during an election debate. Macdonald collected himself and he said he got sick not because of drink but because he was forced to listen to the rantings of his honourable opponent. Mr. Speaker, modern election debates just don't deliver such headlines anymore.

Macdonald, despite his tremendous political success, was aware of his foibles and didn't take himself too seriously. As Prime Minister, he prefaced a meeting with the president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union by saying he was troubled to start a meeting when he could clearly smell water on someone's breath.

Yes, Sir John A. Macdonald was not perfect. He was known to overindulge in strong drink from time to time, even during debates in the House of Commons. But he was forgiven because he could set aside his own faults and his own partisan biases for a broader cause and more compelling, noble purpose.

In his own words, "My sins of omission and commission I do not deny; but I trust that it may be said of me in the ultimate issue, 'Much is forgiven because he loved much,' for I have loved my country with a passionate love."

As our country's first Prime Minister and one of the longest-serving Prime Ministers in Canadian history, he was the driving force behind the birth of our nation as well as the common values that kept the new dominion together during those fledgling early years and saw it expand from sea to sea.

John A. Macdonald was Prime Minister when the first spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway was driven into the ground. He was our nation's leader at the dawn of hydroelectric power that would later fuel the 20th-century economy. Stitching together our country from west to east with a transcontinental railway must have seemed bold and audacious dream at the time, but Macdonald saw it become a reality through his tenacity.

That same tenacity, combined with charm and diplomacy, kept our young country strong in the face of dangerous political turbulence. Even after winning the Maritimes' approval of Confederation at the Charlottetown Conference, primarily through his diplomacy with the Premiers of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Canada was still fragile. Nova Scotia voters largely rejected the pact, while the ink was barely dry, by electing a large contingent of anti-confederate politicians. Macdonald tactfully brought anti-confederate leader Joseph Howe into his cabinet and used his influence to get Nova Scotians onside.

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Even more astute was Sir John A. Macdonald's political manoeuvring at the Washington conference where Britain and the United States were negotiating Civil War grievances. The British government only wanted him there in case it had to give Canada over to the US to reach a settlement. By the end of the conference, however, Canadian affairs accounted for half the agenda and Canada, a colony of Britain at the time, won the remarkable right to grant or withhold approval of the British-US pact.

Even the most successful politician would have called that a great achievement and walked away immensely pleased. Sir John A. Macdonald, however, wanted the icing on his cake. He also walked away with Britain's agreement to lend a very large amount of money to Canada for his trans-Canada railway.

John A. Macdonald was a true visionary. We all know his history as the Father of Confederation, the father of national policy, the father of uniting the railroad and the father of Canadian conservatism.

But he was also ahead of his time in matters we take for granted now in Canada. John A. Macdonald was the

first democratic leader in the world to publicly argue for women's right to vote. It might also surprise some critics of his decision to allow the execution of Louis Riel that Macdonald held a strong belief that Canada's aboriginal people, whom he called the "original owners of the land," should also have the fundamental right to vote.

His message and vision were always hopeful. Macdonald once described the legacy he hoped to leave: "If I had influence over the minds of the people of Canada, any power over their intellect, I would leave them with this legacy: Whatever you do, adhere to the union. We are a great country, and shall become one of the greatest in the universe if we preserve it."

John A. Macdonald reached out and united a land with diverse interests, backgrounds and creeds. He did it with character, he did it with personality and he did it with leadership. For that, we celebrate the bicentennial of Sir John A.'s birth.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I want to wish everyone a merry Christmas, happy holidays and happy birthday to Sir John. You've done so much for our beautiful country.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise on behalf of New Democrats to support what we're trying to do here, and that is, to recognize in a very formal way the contribution that Sir John A. Macdonald had not only to the birth of this nation but, quite frankly, for much of what binds us as Canadians today and what identifies us as Canadians today.

It's ironic, when we look at history 200 years ago, the realities that Sir John A. Macdonald faced. They may not have had television back then. They certainly didn't have the Internet and all the things that we have today, but many of the issues he faced were the same: The economic challenges of a nation that is a small population over a large geography and trying to make our own way in the North American continent with a powerhouse just south of us. He understood that if this country was to survive over the longer end, we needed to find ways to link this country from east to west and north to south. John A. set much of the policy in place that, quite frankly, is still serving this nation today. If you think about it, that is a pretty amazing task.

Our country, at that time, had a very small population as compared to today. We were very much outgunned as far as population by the United States, but he managed by way of policy and by way of other people whom he served with in the Legislature and the business community across Canada to develop this nation that we call Canada today.

Think about it. We forged a nation, we survived as a nation and we are on the world stage as a result of a lot of what happened back then, and the challenges were probably not much different than they are today. We have a lot to be thankful for from those people who came before us, which allows us to stand in this Legislature today and call ourselves Canadian and call ourselves Ontarians. Imagine the challenges.

John A., as was pointed out by previous speakers, was not without his problems as far as character issues. I thought the story that the leader of the official opposition raised in regard to John A. Macdonald having an adventure with debate—I always thought that was something that had actually happened in the House of Commons, but I will not tell the story again. I'll believe your version because I'm only going by memory and I wasn't alive back then.

But the point is, John A. Macdonald knew how to take a situation that most of us would see as insurmountable and was able to turn the corner in order to be able to do the right thing. Both in his personal life—because he certainly had challenges—and in his life as a politician and eventually as Prime Minister of this country, this man had huge mountains to move in order to be able to achieve what he wanted to do. The tenacity of that man, to be able to persevere in that type of environment and to be successful, is a testament to the drive and the will that he had as an individual to do what's right.

So I just want to say, on behalf of New Democrats, we should celebrate John A. Macdonald. He is the father of this nation. He is the one who put in place much of the policy that we see today that allows us to survive as a nation. If we are here today, it's greatly as a result of the work that John A. Macdonald has done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm very pleased to be able to participate in this debate. It was suggested by some wag in our caucus that the reason I was chosen was that I was here when John A. Macdonald was around. That is not true; I can assure you of that.

Also, I have great admiration, as many people in this House do, for Arthur Milnes, who has been an historian and the number-one fan of Sir John A. Macdonald over the years, residing now in Kingston and prompting all of us as Canadians to remember Sir John A. Macdonald and the significant role that he played in our history.

January 11, 2015, indeed will be a very important date for Canada, because our first Prime Minister of Canada was born on that particular occasion and ruled at a time when it was very difficult. We have to look at the conditions under which people lived when Sir John A. Macdonald was Prime Minister of Canada. They're far different from today. An example is—and perhaps I'll elaborate a bit on this a little later on—is the fact that today we can travel from one end of the country in a matter of hours by airplane. If you think of the days of 1867 and previous to that, travel took much, much longer. It wasn't days; it was weeks or months that it took, very often, to travel, depending on how you were travelling from one end of the country to the other.

One of the greatest accomplishments of Sir John A. Macdonald was presiding over the national railway, which took us from one coast to another and helped unite us, because that level of transportation was important to bring Canadians together.

Another thing we recognize in our history—and may I note here that it is alleged that Canadians do not spend as

much time on their historical figures as perhaps those south of the border. I don't know if that's true or not. I know that in popular lore in the United States, there tends to be more about the early political leaders and other leaders in the United States than there is here. But as a former history teacher I can tell you that many people have become very intrigued and interested by Canadian history, and I advise all parents out there who have children going through the school system that one of the subjects that is valuable for them to take is history. There's a plug for history teachers in the province of Ontario.

I want to mention first of all a bit about Arthur Milnes, who is quite an interesting character. He won't be happy at the fact that I have mentioned him rather than Macdonald in this speech, but I was reading some information that was made available. It says that Arthur Milnes, "who shares in that sense of wonderment, is heading the organizing committee that's planning what promises to be the 'biggest birthday party in Canadian history.' Set for January 11, 2015, with some events later this year, the party will celebrate the 200th anniversary of Macdonald's birth.

"As head of the non-profit, non-partisan Sir John A. Macdonald Bicentennial Commission, Milnes is overseeing the planning and execution of events that are scheduled to take place across Canada.

"Our main goal will be to engage Canadians, particularly youth, in the celebration," he says. "It is not just about a history, it's about culture and education, too."

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It's mentioned in the article that Milnes is thrilled that six living former Prime Ministers—Joe Clark, John Turner, Kim Campbell, Brian Mulroney, Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin—have agreed to serve as honorary commissioners, as well as Sir John Major, the former British Prime Minister. So it really takes a person to bring this together, along with His Worship and those in the Kingston area, who have a particular interest in Sir John A. Macdonald and the role he played in Canadian life.

When you look at how the country could have turned out, as opposed to how it did, Sir John A. Macdonald was a moving force. There was a time when it was thought that Canada would be splintered into several different countries rather than provinces at the present time. Even Sir John A. Macdonald, in his early days, couldn't be called a person who was going to think about bringing the country together—with a particularly strong federal government and so on—but changed along the way and recognized the importance for Canada of bringing all parts of this country together, and set out as a goal to do so.

He recognized as well the importance of bringing together, particularly in those days, the two founding nations of Canada, the French and the English. There were divisions, as there are always going to be in circumstances of this kind. He overcame those divisions and was able to work with the opposition, in fact, even though he was a fierce partisan and a very colourful politician, as many will note. But he was also an individual who knew

enough to work with others, who could bring people together, and we should thank him very much for that.

Also, as has been mentioned, in the relationships with the United States—and the leader of the official opposition made some reference to this—Canada was kind of put aside when Britain was negotiating with the United States. We could have been a pawn in those negotiations, and had it not been for Sir John A. Macdonald attending as part of the British delegation in the United States, we might well have turned out quite differently. He fought for Canadian interests.

He would not have been in favour of NAFTA, I think, the North American Free Trade Agreement, because he was very protectionist in his approach to Canadian manufacturing and industry. He set up tariffs to protect them. That has evolved over the years, and perhaps thinking has evolved, but in those particular days, Sir John A. Macdonald said that if we wanted to establish our businesses and industry here, they would need early protection. There might be some who would say—perhaps even me, from time to time—that we could use that kind of protection today, when we're at the mercy of international trade agreements.

One of the things we noticed in Canada as well, as opposed to the United States, because they're two countries side by side, was the way that they evolved. The United States really had the Wild West. People went out west, and law and order was not much of a priority in the early days of the United States. Yet in Canada the contrast was that, through our North-West Mounted Police—our RCMP, eventually—law and order came to the west along with the people going out to the west. So we developed in a very different way.

Macdonald had his challenges from time to time. I thought, for today's debate, that you, Mr. Speaker, or the table, or whoever would make this decision, might exempt us from not having alcoholic beverages in the House, because we're only allowed to have water, of course, and that's probably good for the debates. But in the days of Sir John A. Macdonald, he felt that whisky could be part of the colourfulness of political life in those days, and sometimes fuelled some rather interesting debates. Today, this does not happen in this House, and I don't think that would happen, certainly, in the federal House.

While this is important for Kingston, and we recognize that Sir John A. Macdonald and Kingston go together, when you think of that particular community, all of us as Canadians are proud of him. I remember that, participating as a high school student in public speaking and debating contests, one of my topics was that of Sir John A. Macdonald. It surprised some in the audience, who were aware that my inclination was Liberal, on that particular occasion of making those speeches. But they also saw that in Sir John A. Macdonald I could not resist bringing to their attention his accomplishments on behalf of Canada.

Too often, as I say, we don't place that kind of emphasis on the early founding people of this nation of ours,

those being, in that particular case, maybe the founding fathers, but as has been noted, I think appropriately, he was the first major politician I can think of who thought that women should have the right to vote. I don't know whether it was unmarried women or women, but I saw some reference to it. He was way ahead of his time in that regard and should be thanked for taking that particular tack.

As we look at those accomplishments, I go back to the railroad and think of how important that was in bringing Canada together. If we didn't have that railroad—and there was controversy, I know, as there always is with major projects that governments undertake. There's always some controversy, and there was some controversy that took place in this particular case. It cost him a couple of years out of government, I think, at one time, but he bounced back nicely. Unfortunately for his opponents, and fortunately for him, when his opponents took over, the state of the economy was not very good, and since they took over, they were to blame, of course. When that happened, the economy bounced back and there he was, large as life.

But you cannot underestimate the role that Sir John A. Macdonald played in Canadian history. There were others, and we should pay attention to the others. I see, for instance, an example of perhaps recognition of Sir John A. Macdonald and others that's important is the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway—because it is a freeway, not a tolled highway. I think it's nice when we Canadians name it that; unfortunately, most people call it "Highway 401." But I always look at that sign with some satisfaction and say, "Here was a person who, when defeated, was able to get together with the opposition, for instance, and form a coalition government. Although he was an ardent partisan, as I made reference to earlier, he recognized that, when the nation needed it, it was necessary to bring people together in a coalition government.

I admired the fact as well, and reference has been made to this, that indeed he brought the Maritimes and particularly Mr. Howe into the tent, because, in Nova Scotia, there was some considerable opposition to forming Canada as a nation. And yet he was wise enough to bring him into cabinet, into the tent, if you will, to ensure that there would be support—to use him, and I say that in a positive sense, to bring the support of people from Nova Scotia for Confederation.

When we look at any of the photographs or paintings of the Fathers of Confederation, the person we will recognize as being the ultimate Father of Confederation would certainly be Sir John A. Macdonald. To the people of Kingston, to the people who have been involved to the commission itself, to all historians who have extolled the virtues of Sir John A. Macdonald, despite the fact he had some personal foibles, I give full credit to them.

I encourage Canadians across this country to follow the events that are going to be part of the Sir John A. Macdonald bicentennial. I think that's going to be very important. I go back and thank Arthur Milnes for his particular involvement. He is, I know, in spirit in this

particular building. However, we know the weather is not very good out there and that the transportation mode may be somewhat challenging.

This is one day that I think we're going to see unity in this House. When we get to question period, that may change, but there's unity in this House in the recognition of Sir John A. Macdonald as a great Canadian, as a great leader, as a great person.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Leeds—Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a great privilege to join with my colleagues, particularly my friend across the aisle from Kingston and the Islands, to pay tribute to Sir John A. Macdonald. I have to tell you, I loved the reference to Wikipedia in your speech.

As members know, Sir John A.'s bicentennial will be celebrated in January across Canada, and in Ontario we have some very special reasons to join in those celebrations. I believe it's very important that our province fully participate in the Macdonald bicentennial celebrations, and we should do so for one proud reason. The reason is often forgotten when we consider Canada's Father of Confederation and his commanding legacy. Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, was one of us, an Ontarian. He lived here his entire life. He campaigned and visited more Ontario communities, during a political career that started almost a quarter-century before Confederation and one that continued 25 years after 1867, than perhaps any other leader then or since.

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He served what was to become Ontario as Attorney General for many years. He helped craft laws and policies that still define our province. I say again with pride: Sir John A. Macdonald was one of us: an Ontarian through and through.

Like my honourable friend opposite and other members of the Legislature, I too want to welcome, on behalf of Her Majesty's loyal opposition, the mayor of Kingston, Mayor Paterson. Welcome to Queen's Park. I'm glad you're here today.

Through you, Speaker, I also want to thank the city of Kingston, in particular its Sir John A. Macdonald bicentennial ambassador, Arthur Milnes, who really was the one who wrote all three of the House leaders and asked that we carve out some debate time today for Sir John A. I wish Arthur was here today. I ask you, Your Worship, to please pass along to him my sincere thanks for that request to the three House leaders.

Again, I want to say and talk about Sir John A. and I also want to mention the city of Kingston. Visiting Sir John A. Macdonald's Kingston statue in 1941 on the 50th anniversary of Macdonald's death, former Prime Minister Arthur Meighen, another proud Ontarian, summed up why it is important to pause as we do in this chamber today to recall our shared history: "We turn aside for a mere moment," Mr. Meighen said, "to pay tribute where tribute is due and to gain inspiration if we can, courage if we can, wisdom if we can, at the fountain of history." I submit that Ontarians today will find all of these in the story of Sir John A. Macdonald.

Members of my party, joined by members on all sides, recall with pride Macdonald's 150th birthday celebrations in 1965. Ontario's Premier was then John Robarts. He placed his Minister of Education, a young man from Brampton named William Grenville Davis, in charge of the province's Macdonald birthday celebrations that year. A Sir John A. Macdonald book prize was awarded to the top history student in each Ontario high school in 1965. Visiting professorships from Ontario universities and Scottish universities were encouraged.

Perhaps most importantly, Premier Robarts, joined by Mr. Davis, John Diefenbaker, representatives of Mr. Pearson's government and the government of Quebec, travelled to Kingston on January 11, 1965. Premier Robarts made an important announcement in the speech that night; the deputy House leader alluded to it earlier. In doing so, Premier Robarts, my party's then leader, sought to forever place before our province a tribute to what we would consider as one of Sir John A. Macdonald's greatest accomplishments: the hand of friendship that Macdonald, the Ontarian, extended to Quebec and to all French Canadians.

Mr. Robarts announced on that day in 1965 that the major artery linking Ontario and Quebec, the 401, would be named the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway, and so it was. Ontario had official highway signs made. A historic plaque that's still in existence was unveiled. But Speaker, something was missing, and it's missing today 50 years later. The omission will be of interest to members of this Legislature this morning. It's of interest to us because, as MPPs, we have the ability to correct it.

While Premier Robarts did announce that the 401 would be officially named the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway, this name change was never enshrined. Some years ago, in 2003, the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Jean-Marc Lalonde, who was MPP in 2003, placed a bill on the order paper and in this House calling that the Macdonald-Cartier Freeway would be officially designated. After first reading of that bill, Mr. Lalonde's bill died on the order paper.

Speaker, in closing, I would suggest that members of all parties during Macdonald's bicentennial year of 2015, and following Cartier's bicentennial last September, dedicate themselves to correcting this half-century-old oversight, and in this way—small but symbolic, and fitting—MPPs of all parties in our time can then pay the proper tribute to Macdonald the Ontarian, the citizen of our province who reached out with the hand of friendship to the people of French Canada, and by doing so, this proud Ontarian bequeathed us all a nation, a country we love and cherish—Canada.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's truly an honour to be able to participate in this debate today to celebrate the life and times of our first Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald.

I'm not going to repeat all that has been said. One thing I would like to put on the record—one of the things that John A. Macdonald fought for—is that he united this

country by giving access to all parts of this country, access with rail. I think that's something, on this day, that we should remember: that in many parts of this country, we're losing that access and in many parts of this country, we are feeling disenchanting—and not just rail, Speaker. The things that we need now to unite this country, the things that John A. Macdonald would never have envisioned but I'm sure he would have fought for, would have been Internet access for all parts of this country. Those are the things he understood.

From what I have heard and from what I have read, and one of the reasons I'm proud that he was our Prime Minister, is that he realized that to bring people together—he did it with rail. Now we bring people together in different ways, but there are large portions of this country where that's forgotten.

While we spend a lot of time concentrating on the major cities of this province—I think that's a good thing—we always have to remember that men like John A. Macdonald united this country by looking at all of the country. We have to remember that: We have to look at all of this province, in his memory.

I'm a proud Canadian, and proud that he was our first Prime Minister.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's a pleasure to be in the House to speak about our first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. It really is most appropriate for this assembly to be participating in and recognizing this significant and historical commemoration in January 2015, the bicentennial of Sir John's birth.

I know Kingston has taken hold of Sir John A. as their own, and rightly so. Sir John A.'s presence in Kingston and his long-time residence in and affiliation with Kingston is well known. But as the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, I do want to make mention that Sir John A. also resided and practised law and had his law office in Napanee, Ontario, just outside of Kingston. Of course, the people of Napanee are very proud, and rightly so, of the roots of Sir John A. in their community as well.

I have to say to the members in the Legislature that one of the best books that I've read is Richard Gwyn's biography of Sir John A., wonderful volumes that provide significant insight and recognition of Sir John A. the man as well as Sir John A. the politician and the father of this country.

I would certainly encourage—I'll just take a couple of the things out of—or maybe before I do that, there's also a significant reference for Sir John A. in my riding as well. Although everybody recognizes that Sir John A. was the founding father of this country, and we all know the big things that he had done, there are a lot of other little things that aren't so well known in our history of Sir John A. Macdonald.

One of the great constitutional battles that Sir John A. Macdonald was involved in happened in my riding, in the county of Lanark, and that was that significant federal-

provincial dispute between Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir Oliver Mowat. Of course, Sir Oliver Mowat had been Sir John A.'s apprentice lawyer at his offices in Kingston and Napanee. He went on to become Liberal Premier of Ontario. Sir Oliver and Sir John had some legendary disputes over political jurisdictions, and one of them happened in Lanark county on the Mississippi and the Clyde Rivers. It was over property rights. It eventually got settled by the Privy Council in Westminster in 1884; it went on for about 20 years. But the outcome of that was a recognition of provincial jurisdiction on property rights, and the Rivers and Streams Act of 1884. If anybody happens to be driving up in beautiful McDonald's Corners in Lanark county, you'll see a nice historical plaque recognizing those endeavours back in 1884.

This assembly and everybody here are a legacy of Sir John A. Macdonald. His determination, perseverance and ability to bring people together have resulted in this country, this province, this assembly and all of us here. But again, reading back through those history books, I don't think Sir John A. would recognize the political parties of today and the elected representation today as compared to his times.

When he was often asked what his occupation was, he would put down "cabinet maker," which is quite a creative use. And that is what he did. He cobbled together and crafted collaboration and allegiances, and brought people together. The other thing about being a cabinet maker, one of the things that he really hated but recognized was there—I don't think "hated" is the right word. It was a bee in his bonnet, I guess. He referred to members as "loose fish" if they weren't completely aligned with Sir John's cabinet, and he was forever trying to capture those loose fish because, of course, in those days political parties were not nearly as structured or regimented, and there was far greater flexibility and more independence.

So Sir John A. certainly had outstanding qualities; clearly, outstanding perseverance and determination, but also that ability to bring people together. As a result, we have the best country in the world left in our hands to further make greater and better. It's great to see that Ontario is going to be participating in Kingston and is taking those steps to commemorate our greatest Prime Minister ever.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Further debate? Last call for further debate.

Seeing there is no further debate, pursuant to the order of this House passed earlier, a recorded vote on this motion will be taken at deferred votes this morning.

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. James J. Bradley: No further business, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing that there is no further business, this House stands adjourned—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): —oh, recessed until 10:30 a.m.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I wanted to send you home early, but somebody objected.

The House recessed from 0955 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I understand there may be a list of guests to be introduced. I would remind you to try to be brief in your introductions.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's a great pleasure to introduce my two constituency assistants, Yasmin Walji and Janice Findlay. They're doing great in the office, thank you. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm really honoured to welcome and introduce Rob Hyndman, who is the president of the Sudbury Professional Fire Fighters Association, and Kris Volpe, who is the secretary of the Sudbury Professional Fire Fighters Association. I want to thank them for their service and welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a number of introductions today. On behalf of the member for Brampton West and a page captain for today, Tyler Vis, I would like to introduce his mother, Jennifer Vis; his father, Rodney Vis; his sister, Hannah Vis; his other sister, Abby Vis; his brother, Carter Vis; and his grandmother, Kathy Jakiwchuk. They will be in the members' gallery this morning.

On behalf of the member for Etobicoke Centre, who just walked in—and I apologize for taking his thunder—page captain Maja Toman's father, Tibor Toman, is here. Her brother, Dario, a former page from the spring of 2008, is here. They will be in the public gallery this morning. We always welcome the families of our pages, particularly if they're former pages; welcome back.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to introduce my constituency staff: Wendy McNaughton, Adam Feldman, Connor Percy and Adrian Zita-Bennett, who are here—and, as was just mentioned, Dr. Tibor Toman, one of the best veterinarians in the city.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today I would like to introduce to the House Sue VanderBent, who is the CEO of Home Care Ontario; and Scott McNabb from Home-watch Caregivers. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us today in the public gallery is the father of page Nicholas Zalewski: Jack Zalewski. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I have guests all over the place today. From my constituency office in Guelph: Clodagh Manning and Frank Tersigni. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Up in the public gallery are a whole lot of people from the early years division at the Ministry of Education. I think they've come to hear what we have to say about them. Welcome to question period.

And watching on TV is my director of communications, Mike Semansky, who is actually having his last

question period ever. Unfortunately, he's leaving us, so a shout-out to Mike.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: This morning I would like to introduce to the Legislature Mr. Marek Goldyn, known to many members here as "Mr. Europe." He is the CEO of the European Club of Canada. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I have a few guests to introduce today. First of all, for the last four years, I've had the privilege of teaching at the Schulich School of Business at York University. One of my best students is here today: Omar Saadat.

I would also like to welcome Tibor Toman, who is the father of Maja Toman, one of our pages, and Dario Toman, who is a former page and also the brother of Maja, who is a wonderful young lady.

I would also like to welcome Marek Goldyn—whom we all know—one of the leaders of the Polish community. Thank you all for coming.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to introduce, in the members' gallery today, my partner, Chris Van der Vyver—he's come all the way from Kingston—and Arthur Milnes, whose wonderful idea it was today to have the Sir John A. Macdonald tribute. Thank you and welcome.

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to introduce Ian McMillan, who is the executive director at Tourism Sault Ste. Marie. He is here in the members' gallery with us today.

Hon. Michael Coteau: There are board members and volunteers for the Ontario Trillium Foundation who are joining here today, and I would like to welcome them all. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Actually, Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring a point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I am deeply offended by the member from Timmins—James Bay's comments in the House last night, who is quoted in Hansard as saying that government backbenchers don't understand what's going on around this place because we are new—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. That's not a point of order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs would do himself a favour by not interjecting.

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the board of deputy affairs of the National Assembly of Vietnam. We welcome our guests. Thank you for joining us.

ANSWERS TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Oxford on a point of order.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I filed a number of order paper questions, some of which have been marked as tabled on December 8 and one on December 9, but I have not yet actually received a response from the ministries. I would ask you to look into it to see how they could be tabled but have not been given yet to the questioner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. One moment.

I have been advised that it has been tabled. They have been delivered. We don't know why it's not in your office. So we'll take the attempt to look into it to ensure that what we're saying is factual. Thank you.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General confirmed what the PC caucus has been saying all along: that this government has made a mess of the energy file. The global adjustment tax is yet another grab at Ontarians' wallets, cooked up by this government to cover the outrageous costs and losses of the failed Green Energy Act. Ontarians have been duped out of \$50 billion—that's five times the current provincial deficit—and hydro bills are at record highs.

Premier, the Auditor General has said the global adjustment tax has been a bad deal for Ontarians. Do you believe the auditor is wrong about this one, too?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Energy is going to want to comment on the specifics, but let me just talk about what we have been doing in the energy system for the last few years, because when with we came into office, the energy system in Ontario was in a serious state of disarray.

What we have been doing is, we have been modernizing the electricity system across the province. We've invested \$11 billion since 2003 in systems across the province, Mr. Speaker. We've upgraded over 10,000 kilometres of power lines that had been neglected—work that had not been done, infrastructure that had not been upgraded. We've taken that on. We've rebuilt 10,000 megawatts of new, cleaner power for Ontario. The green energy strategy has created \$24 billion in private sector investment.

So, in fact, people in Ontario have the power that they need. It's predictable, and, at the same time, we have made it reliable across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, the Auditor General found that the global adjustment tax on electricity bills has increased by 1,200% since it was first introduced by your government. The Auditor General confirmed that nearly 60% of this \$30 billion goes towards paying for wind

turbines and solar panels in your outrageous subsidies to that industry. It's a double slap in the face to rural communities, like the ones many of us represent. Residents are stuck footing the bill for wind turbines they never wanted in the first place while their hydro bills skyrocket.

The Auditor General's report is further proof that the Green Energy Act has been a complete failure. Your global adjustment tax is the only thing that has kept the Green Energy Act on life support.

Premier, will you admit that the Green Energy Act is failure and pull the plug on your failed energy policies?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

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Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The global adjustments are calculations that are made as part of the pricing policy that exists in jurisdictions across North America and the world. What it is is the real price of energy. By that, I mean that there are certain things that are not included in the market price that's out there day after day. For example, the costs of the Independent Electricity System Operator: They don't actually engage in the creation of generation but they manage and operate the system, and their costs go into the global adjustment as part of the cost of the energy system. As well, many of the costs of conservation are not relevant to the market price of electricity. The Ontario Energy Board approves those costs: the costs of the IESO and the other costs that relate to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: Since you brought the global adjustment tax—which is a tax that didn't exist when we were in office; you brought it in in 2006—Ontarians, according to the Auditor General, will have paid \$10,000 by this time next year. That's \$1,000 a year extra on a new tax that you brought in. And the minister says that it's to pay for the OPA—the Ontario Power Authority—or the IESO, or new transmission.

Those things were paid for in the cost of electricity when we were in power. We didn't have an extra tax. The reason you brought in the extra \$50-billion tax is that you needed a way to sneakily hide the subsidy to your green energy policy.

When all of those things that the minister is talking about were once paid for at the regular rate of electricity, you needed, the auditor says, another \$30 billion to subsidize Mr. McGuinty's, and now Ms. Wynne's—the Premier's—plan. Will you get rid of the darn thing and stop the Green Energy Act—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Renewable energy represents about 8% of the bill—

Interjection.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: It is a smaller portion of the bill—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Oxford, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: There have been significant investments made in the energy sector because we had a deficit of electricity—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Shifts are being cancelled.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —and we had dirty coal burning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Huron—Bruce, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In order to rebuild the system, to make it clean and reliable, we invested in hydroelectric. We invested in the tunnel in Niagara. We invested, in the Lower Mattagami River, \$2.6 billion.

Mr. John Yakubuski: That's why you should burn that policy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, come to order. Second time.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: That put pressure on prices, and we have put in mitigation measures to deal with those.

The steps that we had to take to invest \$31 billion are the \$31 billion in transmission and generation that the previous government refused to invest. That created a deficit and a very dirty system.

Mr. Speaker, the prices come from their negligence in the past, and we're resolving it.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again for the Premier: Following the release of the Auditor General's report, your Energy Minister tried to deflect responsibility by discrediting the work undertaken by an independent officer of this Legislature. His actions were unprecedented.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, come to order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: They were also very unacceptable. On your minister's watch, Ontarians are paying billions of dollars extra for electricity, thanks to a flawed smart meter program and above-market rates that the province pays most power generators. And most of those power generators are under your Green Energy Act.

Premier, you remain committed to the global adjustment tax; you refuse to tear up the Green Energy Act: Will you at least make one smart energy decision and fire your energy minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said a number of times yesterday, the decisions that we have made around the energy system, including smart meters, have modernized and upgraded the energy system. We made investments in transmission lines, we've produced and invested in more clean power, and smart meters have allowed us to have data that we would not have otherwise.

I know that the leader of the third party knows that people who work in the system, and people who are experts in the system, believe that the smart meters have

given us data that's important and have allowed conservation to take place across the province.

The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, another officer of the Legislature, said about smart meters, "They are necessary—absolutely necessary for the proper functioning and future functioning of the distribution system for electricity," and he goes on to talk about smart grid technology. We've made very good decisions on—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: The Auditor General's report is tough medicine for the government. Sometimes you need to admit your mistakes, swallow the medicine and spend time in the penalty box.

During my time as a senior cabinet minister, I had to make tough decisions, and I stepped aside when it was appropriate, and I did so voluntarily. The auditor's report on Liberal government programs is loaded with examples of gross incompetence, waste and mismanagement, costing Ontarians billions and billions of dollars. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Ministry of Energy.

Premier, are you willing to take the tough medicine and demand that your energy minister resign?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Energy is going to want to comment in the final supplementary, but as I said yesterday, on the vast majority of the recommendations and concerns that the Auditor General raised, we are in full agreement. We are working with the Auditor General, or we have already begun to work on the concerns that she identifies.

As the Minister of Energy said yesterday, there was a professional disagreement on some very narrow aspects of the concerns that the Auditor General raised. Those have been expressed. The conversations between the Minister of Energy and the Auditor General have been just that: They've been professional. It is not the first time in the history of this Legislature that there has been a disagreement between a government and an officer of the Legislature, so I think that the Leader of the Opposition needs to look back in history and needs to understand that that kind of healthy professional dialogue actually is in the best interests of the people of the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: The take-away from the Auditor General's line-by-line investigations is that Ontario can't afford to go on like this. From patients to pensioners, from families with children to our most vulnerable residents in need, hard-working taxpayers are not getting value for the essential public services they rely on.

Spending continues to skyrocket on your government's watch, while accountability and service delivery continue to plummet. The Auditor General now joins the Conference Board of Canada, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the PC caucus, who have all raised serious red flags about your government's out-of-control spending. Following the release of the AG's report, no one believes you will balance the budget by 2017-18.

Premier, if you aren't willing to fire your energy minister over the Auditor General's findings, would you give Ontarians a Christmas present and tell us who the heck is going to take responsibility for the mess you've made in this province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Start the clock.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address the Auditor General's report. There are some significant professional disagreements with respect to the report. One of the areas of disagreement is the position in the report that most of the anticipated benefits of smart meters have not been achieved. Where the professional disagreement starts is with the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, who says smart meters are "a shrewd investment that will benefit both individual consumers of power and society as a whole."

If you want to go to Anthony Haines, president and CEO of Toronto Hydro: "That smart meter program is the best thing we've done in the decade." And, "I'm telling you, [the smart meter program] was a deal changer. That was the entry into intelligent use of energy." He also confirmed at the press conference the other day that there is a 3% reduction in use in the city of Toronto, which is a very, very significant savings.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Ontario's energy system is in a hot mess. Hydro bills are going up, the Auditor General says we're not reducing energy consumption, and it turns out the \$1-billion smart meter plan was actually the Liberals' \$2-billion not-so-smart meter plan.

If a regular person went \$1 billion over budget on a project, that person would be fired. Why is this Liberal minister getting away with this and able to keep his job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I challenge the premise of the question. The fact is that the changes we have made in the energy system mean it has been modernized, that infrastructure that had been neglected has been upgraded, that we have a cleaner, more renewable energy system in the province—it's more reliable—and people across the province have access to the power that they need.

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In terms of the smart meters, the decision to have smart meters across the province has meant that there is data available to the system that was not available before and that people are able to conserve in ways they were not able to conserve before. A 3% shift of power off peak time in the city of Toronto alone: That's the equivalent of the power needed for 97 condominium buildings. That's a significant reduction in the use of power, and we're able to do that because of the introduction of smart meters.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the fact is, the Liberals promised that smart meters would help people

reduce their bills. Instead, even people who are doing the right thing, or trying to do the right thing, by doing their laundry at midnight are paying 114% more.

This is incompetence, Speaker. There is no other way to describe it. People are paying the price for this incompetence. My question to this Premier is: Why is her minister not paying the price for his incompetence?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I will once again just read into the record some of the comments that were made about the introduction of smart meters by people who actually know what's going on and are actually seeing.

There's no doubt that there have been increases in the cost of electricity, as there have been in jurisdictions all over North America and the world, but the fact is that we are taking steps to mitigate those increases. We have renegotiated contracts. We have made changes, including putting smart meters in place so that people can conserve.

Anthony Haines, who is the president and CEO of Toronto Hydro, says, "We've seen about a 3% shift off the peak here in the city of Toronto; 3% is 97 condominium buildings—97 condominium buildings that came on the grid over the same period of time. We didn't have to make any additional capital investment because that shift of that 3% provided that capacity within our grid."

That's a cost saving. That's power that didn't have to be built.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, bring it down.

Please continue. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Under the Liberals' watch, the electricity system in this province has become a colossal mess. The global adjustment charge has increased by 1,200% in 10 years. Ontarians are paying three times the market price for electricity. The Liberals are not reducing electricity consumption in this province. Hydro One customers have received astronomical bills for electricity they didn't even use. The list, unfortunately, sadly, goes on and on and on.

In the real world, people get fired for this kind of laundry list of failure. Will the Premier finally do the right thing on the last day of this session and tell her minister it's time to go and ask him for his resignation?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the leader of the third party obviously knows more than Anthony Haines, who is the CEO of the second-largest distribution company in the province, who came before the press conference two days ago and outlined that in the city of Toronto, there has been a 3% reduction in consumption as a result of smart meters, allowing a lot more money to be invested in the system.

As well, the Ontario Energy Board had the Navigant study, which showed that the costs per customer are esti-

mated to be approximately \$12 per year lower because of load shifting and conservation driven by smart-meter-enabled time-of-use pricing. Over three years, that represents approximately \$150 million in savings which have not been accounted for by the Auditor General.

Mr. Speaker, we are saving dollars.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. This session began with an unprecedented display of arrogance and ended with an even greater display of arrogance by this government. It began with the Liberals using time allocation to shut down debate and to shut Ontarians out of committee hearings. It ended with the Liberals' condescending and sexist attack on the Auditor General. I—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Thank you. Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have to ask this Premier: Is that what we can continue to expect from her Liberal government in the weeks and years to come?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me address the first part of the question first and then I'll speak to the second part.

To the first part of the question: When we came back into the Legislature after the election, we made it clear that legislation that had been on the order paper, that we had been working to get through, that had had hours and hours of discussion, we were going to work now in this Parliament to move through more quickly, because there was a backlog. There was work that really needed to be done, like the modernization of the child care system, which resulted out of a concern to keep kids safer in the system.

So we have worked, and I will not apologize for working very hard, to move legislation through. We have provided—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins—James Bay and the member from Leeds—Grenville will come to order, and if you do that again, I'll jump right to a warning.

Please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have worked very hard—it's true—to get legislation moved through this Legislature. I'm very proud of the amount of legislation that we've been able to move through the process.

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you. I'll address the second part in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Throughout this session, Liberals have been trying to whitewash the gas plant scandal. But the OPP is still investigating the deletion of gas plant emails. In fact, the OPP detectives yet again raided

government offices just a few weeks ago, in November. But Laura Miller and Peter Faist, two Liberal insiders who were, frankly, at the centre of this scandal, are still being protected.

As this session closes, I have to wonder, is this the Liberal brand of transparency and accountability that we're going to continue to see from this Liberal Premier and her government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, again, the questions are all over the map. But let me just pick up on the transparency and accountability, because this is a member, the leader of the third party, who has been calling for increased accountability. Apparently, that is what she wants to believe is her brand. But her party sat in their place and did not support Bill 8, which is the accountability act, which actually expands the scope of the Ombudsman, sets up a system within the health care system—

Mr. Paul Miller: Another Liberal half-bill—less than half a bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The President of the Treasury Board will come to order.

Now, let me be clear, in case it wasn't heard: The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That accountability act will put in place a patient ombudsman and would put caps in place on executive salaries. They voted against that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I guess that was a yes, Speaker.

While the Premier continues to protect Liberal insiders and Liberal cabinet ministers—she continues to support them and protect them too—she is actually hurting Ontarians. She is slashing 6% out of nearly every ministry. She is cutting schools—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Eglinton–Lawrence, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: She is cutting schools; she is cutting health care; she is cutting child care. Families are paying higher hydro and gas prices while the CEOs in this province get new HST loopholes to take to the bank. People on OW and ODSP are worried that the problems that the Premier has created are still not fixed.

The Premier continues with the gas plant cover-up, Speaker. When will this Premier start actually standing up—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, I would ask you to withdraw.

Interjection: “Cover-up.”

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Oh, okay. I withdraw.

The Premier continues to not be forthcoming on what the Liberal involvement was with the gas plant scandal.

My question is: When will the Premier actually start standing up for the people of Ontario instead of the Liberal Party of Ontario?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Standing up for the people of Ontario, building Ontario up, working to get legislation passed that is going to improve business and people's lives in this province—legislation like reduction of red tape, legislation like modernization of child care, legislation like the accountability act that will put more accountability into the system, legislation like indexing the minimum wage so that the minimum wage will go up as the cost of living goes up; health care protections like pharmacy safety, blood donation safety; and legislation that will remove costs from the auto insurance system so that auto insurance rates will continue to go down. That's the work that we're doing on this side of the House.

It seems to me that that legislation, all of that, is legislation that the leader of the third party should have supported. We will continue to work to make sure that that kind of improvement—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Applause.

Interjection: That's for you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Order, please.

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, yesterday we saw in this House a doubling down of your abysmal administration of the energy system and your unprecedented attack on the Auditor General. Today, the only thing piling up faster than the snow outside is your excuses for your failed energy policies.

On Tuesday, we got confirmation from the AG that your smart meter fiasco will cost energy consumers double what you claim. Smart meters haven't cut consumption at peak times, and often they don't even relay the information back to the central data centre.

Minister, this is your chance to admit the errors of your government's policies and take responsibility for this smart meter scandal, which has piled up on top of scandal after scandal after scandal for your government. Will you take responsibility?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I do want to address some of the challenge in the electricity system. As I said, we have made major investments. Smart meters are one of them, and we've provided all of those quotes.

But where were the seeds of this challenge that we have in the energy sector? Hansard, December 1, 2003—Frank Klees, former member from Aurora: “Well, there's one reason that we accumulated that debt in this province under the hydro ledger, and that is that people in this province for years have not been paying the true cost of hydro. It was in fact being subsidized, and a pox on all of the previous governments that had allowed that to happen.” That includes Conservative governments.

A quote from MPP and former energy minister Jim Wilson: "This summer when we didn't have enough electricity in this province because we hit peak high temperatures and all the air conditioners were running, we had to buy power.... I had to pay \$7 million one day"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: As I said, more excuses; no answers. Minister, your failure to accept responsibility for yet—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Both sides, bring it down.

Please finish.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Minister, your failure to accept responsibility for yet another energy scandal leads me to believe that you're the one going to be receiving a lump of coal in your stocking this Christmas.

In another one of your boondoggles, the Auditor General found that from 2006 to 2013, the global adjustment—that is the difference between the price of energy and the cost of the energy contracts you have signed for expensive, unreliable power—increased by 1,200% while the average market price for energy decreased by 46%. That amounts to a staggering \$50-billion charge on the backs of energy consumers in the province of Ontario.

Minister, since you won't accept responsibility for this scandal and all of the other scandalous policies of your government, will you finally do the right thing and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Start the clock.

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, before the global adjustment, wholesale market prices were insufficient to cover the cost of contract payments to certain electricity generators, leading the government to accumulate billions of dollars in debt, part of the debt I referred to earlier that had been accumulated by the previous government. This contributed to the stranded debt that Ontario consumers continue to pay off through the debt retirement charge. The global adjustment is allowing the costs of the system to be recovered. Previously, they were accumulating debt, and it's the stranded debt that is on our hydro bills today, which we are going to remove two years earlier—which that party voted against.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Thanks to the Auditor General, we now know that 74 infrastructure projects in Ontario could have been built for \$28 billion rather than the \$36 billion that this Liberal government spent using the P3 model. I want to quote the very competent and qualified Auditor General: Costs "were estimated to be nearly \$8 billion higher under the alternative financing and procurement (AFP) approach than they were estimated to have been if the projects had

been delivered by the public sector." About \$6.5 billion of this overpayment is a direct result of paying excessive interest rates on money borrowed from the highly profitable Canadian and international banks.

Yesterday, the Premier continued to defend this \$8-billion boondoggle, despite overwhelming evidence that these projects should be built and financed through the public sector. When will the Premier admit that her P3 program is nothing more than a massive gift to some of the world's largest banks, paid for by the hard-working people of this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I would have hoped that the member opposite was listening yesterday when I referred her leader to the heart of the auditor's report, where there's a graph that completely explains that you can't just talk about a cost; you have to talk about a benefit. When you talk about a cost of transferring risk of \$8 billion, you've got talk about the benefit to the taxpayer of a \$14-billion transfer of risk. This means, in the Auditor General's report, a \$6.6-billion savings to the taxpayer.

It's not that complicated, Mr. Speaker. It's right in the Auditor General's report. I'm going to ask a page, if I can, to bring it over to the member opposite. I'd be happy to have my officials brief her to make sure that they understand that when they talk about a cost—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's interesting: The minister's right, and it isn't that complicated. There is no factual basis, no empirical evidence for that number that's attached to the retained risks. I have that document. The auditor wrote it, and she was right.

Speaker, the minister or the Premier can use any number that they want to defend their P3 giveaways, because we know that they're all fiction anyway. I just want to return to the numbers, because the numbers don't lie. From my initial question: 74 infrastructure projects cost \$36 billion instead of \$28 billion. That's a 20% premium. We cannot afford that.

The fact is that the numbers being spun by the Premier and the minister are every bit as made up as the so-called value-for-money audits that the auditor said there was no evidence for. We believe the auditor. This is another example of this Liberal government's habit of desperate and unconvincing attempts to spin the numbers. When will this government admit that its P3 program is a colossal failure and end this massive drain on the public treasury?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, under the AFP program to date, 37 projects are near completion or at completion, 97% of those projects on budget—97%. That is an unprecedented record, not only for Ontario but anywhere in the industrialized world. So for her to suggest that Infrastructure Ontario is failing the people of this province is blatantly incorrect.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener—Waterloo will come to order.

Please finish.

1110

Hon. Brad Duguid: In terms of the value-for-money system of analyzing risk, 19 of 20 OECD countries use that very same methodology. Forty countries—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Brad Duguid: —have come here to learn from us. We're the best in the world, but we're going to get even better at doing this. That's why we do accept the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Transit is incredibly important for those living in my community in Davenport. Those living in Davenport want to know that they have access to reliable and affordable travel options, whether they are travelling to school—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will withdraw.

Mr. Paul Miller: Withdraw what?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will withdraw.

Mr. Paul Miller: I don't know what you're talking about, but I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek will simply withdraw.

Mr. Paul Miller: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, those living in Davenport want to know that they have access to reliable and affordable travel options, whether they are travelling to school, to work or even to the airport.

I know that yesterday the minister, along with the Premier, joined Metrolinx CEO Bruce McCuaig in announcing the fares for the Union Pearson Express.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I understand that there has been a lot of discussion in regard to the UP Express fares lately, and I know that those living in my community are interested in learning more on this topic.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please provide members of this House with details on yesterday's—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the member from Davenport for this question and for all of her hard work. I also want to say, unlike perhaps the member from Timmins—James Bay, that those of us on this side of the House value every single member who represents a community.

That member is quite correct: There has been a lot of discussion regarding fares for the UP Express, as we call

it, and that's why I was very happy to stand alongside the Premier along with representatives from Metrolinx and the Greater Toronto Airports Authority yesterday to announce the fares.

As people might know, Metrolinx has proposed an adult fare of \$19 for Presto card users. There are also a number of other variable pricing options that have been proposed, including a \$10 fare for airport workers, a discounted fare for students and seniors, variable fares for those getting on or off at different stations, and free access to the UP Express—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —for children under the age of six. This fare structure will allow us to balance revenue and capacity, ensuring enough ridership to allow UP Express to become self-financing within three to five years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I want to thank the minister for his response. I know that my constituents in Davenport have been very interested in learning more about the Union Pearson Express fare structure.

You mentioned that it is important that the UP Express be self-financing, something which will ensure the financial viability of the service for many years to come. But those living in Davenport will want to know how the UP Express will be different than other options currently available, like the TTC and taxis.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please provide members of this House with more specifics on how the UP Express will help travellers in my community?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Once again, I thank the member from Davenport for her thoughtful question.

The UP Express was designed as a dedicated express link for air travellers, offering fast and predictable service. This means a guaranteed travel time of 25 minutes for riders as well as trains arriving every 15 minutes, 19½ hours per day. The service will also provide travellers with amenities that make their journey easier, such as airline check-in kiosks, luggage racks and up-to-the-minute flight information.

Travellers will choose the UP Express because it's faster, more reliable and less expensive than any other direct airport-to-downtown modes of transportation they may be using. TTC, GO Transit, personal vehicles, taxis and limousines will all continue to provide a wide range of alternatives for travellers and those working at or near the airport.

Once again, we are very excited about this service that's being delivered on time and on budget. We know that in the spring, when it's operating, the people of this region will be excited as well.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. Minister, yesterday I attended both the technical briefing provided by your ministry as well as your announcement regarding the future of MaRS phase

2. I was astonished that you accepted the expert panel's recommendation to sink an additional \$86 million into the project. What concerns me most about the mess you've made is the risk that you've put taxpayers at by spending an additional one third of the building's value. Your goal to have MaRS replace your loan with a commercial loan is more wishful than realistic.

Minister, will you confirm to this House that even if leased up, the government will only receive repayment on the loan and not the \$65-million bailout to ARE or the extra \$86 million you blew yesterday?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to begin by thanking Michael Nobrega and Carol Stephenson for the great work that they've done on behalf of Ontario taxpayers and on behalf of those of us in this Legislature who want to continue to grow a strong economy, who want to continue to invest in our bioscience cluster and want to continue to ensure that Ontario remains a global centre for innovation and growth.

Their advice, which comes from many, many decades of experience, is advice that provides us with a very solid business plan to ensure that the investments we've made in MaRS are fully secured, fully protected, to ensure that the loan that we have made will be paid back in full with interest and to ensure that this project will now be finished, that jobs will be created and this will continue to be an Ontario success story.

I'm glad for that advice and I'm glad the government has decided—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Minister, you can spout all you want about your positive vision for a building, but at the end of the day, it's our party over here that's the only one that cares about the taxpayer. Your government has blown \$400 million to build a building we never needed, only to fill it with even more government-funded institutions.

Your announcement yesterday confirmed what we've been saying all along. The only way you would fill this building is by leasing it to government-funded tenants. At the end of the day, we are just funding them to pay you. That's not a good business model, but we already knew there never was a business case for MaRS.

Minister, will you tell this House today what percentage of tenants or those who have signed letters of intent are private companies that receive no government funding?

Hon. Brad Duguid: On one hand we have the advice of two of the most esteemed people in our business community who have decades of experience in these kinds of transactions; on the other hand we have the advice of the member opposite. Call me crazy, but I'm taking the advice of the expert panel—

Interjections: Crazy. You're crazy.

Hon. Brad Duguid: And the opposition will be happy to do that. The opposition will be very happy to do that.

But I and this government are taking the advice of the expert panel because it's a good business plan. It's good business advice.

The party opposite, when this project was having challenges, wanted to let a building at College and University rot in the ground. They wanted to let this potential building, that's going to generate jobs and economic development, go to absolute waste. That would have been the wrong thing to do then; it would be the wrong thing to do now. We're taking the advice of the expert panel and we're moving forward.

CORONER'S INQUEST

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. A tragic boating accident in the Sudbury area caused the deaths of three people last year. The only survivor was Rob Dorzek, who lost his spouse and two of his close friends. The president of the Sudbury Professional Fire Fighters Association has said there were "major deficiencies" in the emergency response system that evening. Mr. Dorzek, the people of Sudbury and the professional firefighters have all asked for an inquest into this tragedy.

Will the Premier do the right thing and support the people of Sudbury by demanding an inquest into this tragedy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services will want to comment on the supplementary.

I want to assure everyone here today that this is an issue that we take very, very seriously. I understand that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services met with the Sudbury firefighters' association this morning, and I had an opportunity to speak to two of the members there. I would like to thank the first responders for the hard work they do all over the province, including in Sudbury, to keep communities safe.

My deepest condolences go to the family and friends of the victims of this tragic incident. Obviously, it is a tragedy. While the regional supervising coroner decided not to call an inquest into the matter, it's important to note that the family of the deceased may appeal this decision to the office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario, and so we will let that process unfold.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: After meeting with your ministry representatives or with the government's ministry representatives, Mr. Dorzek and the families involved still feel that they have been receiving conflicting stories on this matter. These families, and the people of Sudbury, need assurances that they can actually trust their emergency response systems. An internal report by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care outlined an emergency response system that is rife with miscommunication and with confusion. The people in the Sudbury area need to know that when they dial 911, they are going to receive the help that they need.

The chief coroner's office is under the purview of this Liberal government. Instead of asking these families to go through more paperwork, why will this Premier not do the right thing and just call for the inquest?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question. Let me first and foremost share all our condolences in this House for the tragic accident that took place in Sudbury and those who lost their lives. Obviously our thoughts go to the families.

I think the member opposite knows very well that I, as the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, or the government do not have the power or the capacity to ask the coroner to conduct an inquest. It's an independent, arm's-length decision-making process, and it's totally up to the coroner to make that determination.

As the Premier mentioned, it is up to the families to avail the appeal process. My understanding is that the families may be doing this.

But, Speaker, this is a very serious issue. We take it very seriously. I had a great opportunity to meet with Sudbury firefighters, and I look forward to continuing to work with them to ensure that we restore the faith and confidence in emergency management in Sudbury.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Chris Ballard: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, it's fundamentally important that our government protect the voluntary blood donation system. Every year, thousands of Ontarians voluntarily give blood and plasma to help others survive accidents, surgery and life-threatening conditions.

Voluntary donation is an important pillar of our nation's public blood system. In fact, I know many of my constituents in Newmarket–Aurora are regular blood donors and have been asking about this new legislation passed yesterday.

I'm very proud of our voluntary life-saving blood donation system, and I'm also proud of the care that health care professionals in Ontario provide patients every day. I encourage all Ontarians to donate blood if they are able to do so.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to tell us about the importance of protecting the integrity of our voluntary blood donation system and why this bill was so important to pass.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's true: Yesterday, our government passed Bill 21, Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act, 2014. This bill combines our government's actions to safeguard our voluntary blood and plasma donation system in the province, as well as the regulation of hospital pharmacies to strengthen oversight and improve patient safety.

Health Canada had received licence applications from at least one private for-profit company seeking to open plasma collection sites in Ontario that would pay people

for their plasma, a component of blood. However, Health Canada has left the decision to permit or prohibit payment for blood or plasma donations to the individual provinces and territories.

Our government took action. We heard from many health care organizations, advocacy groups and individual Ontarians who were opposed to private for-profit plasma collection. As a government, we agree. We stand firmly against payment for blood or plasma donations in Ontario, and that's reflected in the legislation that passed yesterday with unanimous support.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Yes, it certainly did pass with unanimous consent. Congratulations.

I heard the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care reference the second part of the bill that I've not yet had the opportunity to ask about. My constituents in Newmarket–Aurora were shocked by the news last year that over 1,000 patients in Ontario received weaker doses of chemotherapy drugs than had been prescribed by their oncologists. That was a very serious incident. No one should ever have to go through what those cancer patients and their families went through.

I know that Dr. Jake Thiessen was appointed to review the incident and to lead a third-party review of the cancer drug system. Dr. Thiessen brought forward a report and recommendations. My constituents in Newmarket–Aurora want to know how these recommendations are captured in Bill 21.

Through you, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, how is the government addressing Dr. Thiessen's recommendations to prevent a tragedy like this from happening again?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Newmarket–Aurora for this very important supplementary question. The member is correct when stating that no one should ever have to go through what the affected cancer patients and their families went through in this tragedy.

Following Dr. Jake Thiessen's report, our government accepted and endorsed all of his recommendations, and our legislation, the Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act, now enables our health regulatory colleges to share more information with hospitals and public health authorities so that we can prevent future incidents from affecting patient care.

Our legislation also reflects Dr. Thiessen's recommendation to authorize the College of Pharmacists to inspect and license all our hospital pharmacies operating in Ontario as a means to ensure that medication management and processing systems in hospital pharmacies are standardized.

I'd like to thank every member in the House for supporting this very—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Speaker, the previous minister was so

concerned last May about being unable to produce his high-speed rail prefeasibility study, he pledged: "One of the first things we want to do if we're re-elected is get those studies out there."

It may be one of the first things he wanted to do, but apparently the current minister didn't get that message. I had to wait two months after asking this House for the study to be produced before making an FOI request. I'm happy to report that we now have the study, through FOI, but we found about 20% of it has been redacted.

In the spirit of openness and transparency, will the minister provide the missing information from page 48 under the heading "Could There Be an Integrated Solution"—in the spirit of openness and transparency?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: As I always begin by saying, I want to thank the member from Kitchener for his question. I was really thrilled to have the opportunity, just a number of days ago—late last week—to be in London, Ontario, a wonderful community that is very lucky to be represented by the Deputy Premier and President of Treasury Board. At that particular event, we were jointly with the mayor of London, Mayor Brown, announcing the launch of the environmental assessment process for the high-speed rail project, which is very exciting news for London, for Kitchener–Waterloo, of course, for Windsor—in fact, great news for all of southwestern Ontario.

As I said that day at the announcement, this is an environmental assessment that will take place over the next four to six years. It will help build on the work done in the prefeasibility report that the member opposite is referencing. It will discuss items around technical requirements, technical options, the routing, the number of stations. But the bottom line is that the people of London, the people of Kitchener, the people of Windsor, the people right across southwestern Ontario are very happy—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: You must need a special pair of glasses to see what is written in here.

Anyway, I know he wants to talk about the EA for 2015, the same EA the Premier announced was already under way a few months ago. The fact is, the Wynne Liberals were so eager to label themselves as bullet train champions before the election, they got a London, England, firm, First Class Partnerships, to do a rush job to provide them high-speed rail credibility.

In fact, FCP's Michael Schabas told CBC, "We did in two weeks what normally would take three to four months." They didn't even have time to examine the railroad in person, so FCP relied on Google Earth. This was nothing more than a pre-election bid to get votes with \$115,000 of taxpayers' money.

Will the minister tell us why we should take direction for a multi-billion-dollar high-speed, high-risk transit project from a rush-job study?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thought I heard that member at the beginning of his question suggest that somehow the EA was announced previously. In fact, it wasn't; we launched it last Friday.

It's understandable from my perspective that that member would be confused about all of the good news coming from this government, particularly for Kitchener–Waterloo, for London, for Windsor and for all of Ontario, because of the very ambitious, robust transportation and transit infrastructure plan that we have.

But don't just take my word for it. Let's actually look to see what the new mayor of London, Matt Brown, said about the launch of the EA just last week. I want to quote the mayor of London, Matt Brown. He said, "This is fantastic news for London. High-speed rail will benefit many vital economic sectors in London. We look forward to working with the province on this initiative."

I would have thought that that member would want to work with us to deliver positive results for Kitchener, because that is the work that we are doing.

1130

WATER QUALITY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: My question is to the Premier. Seven months ago, the Premier went to Walkerton, where seven people died 14 years ago due to drinking water contamination. She said, "There was a failure of oversight, a failure of enforcement. Cuts have consequences."

In 2006, the government promised to protect our drinking water from contamination at the source. This was a key recommendation of the Walkerton commission, and yet, when the Auditor General checked in eight years later, the government had approved plans to protect the drinking water of only 5% of Ontarians.

How hypocritical is it for the Premier to stand in Walkerton and say—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Carry on.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: How shameful is it for the Premier to stand in Walkerton and say that cuts and poor oversight caused this tragedy when her own government is planning deep spending cuts and has still not implemented key recommendations from the Walkerton commission?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Ontario is one of the only jurisdictions in North America with source water protection plans, and these plans are one element—they're just one element—in a robust water protection system that was put in place to ensure that Ontario's drinking water is among the best protected in North America.

Let me be clear: Despite what the Auditor General alludes to in her report, another Walkerton will not happen in Ontario. Following the Walkerton inquiry, Justice O'Connor made 121 recommendations on areas related to protected drinking water. Ontario is acting on all 121 recommendations, every single one of them, including the source water protection plans. By the end of this year, half of the water protection plans will be implemented,

and by the end of next year, all 22 plans will be implemented.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Speaker, the government has still not approved the plan to protect the drinking water of the Credit Valley, Toronto region and central Lake Ontario area, representing more than half of the people in Ontario. This plan includes provisions to protect against pipeline spills.

Because the government refuses to approve it, Enbridge has refused to follow the planned safety rules for its Line 9 pipeline. The Auditor General wondered why this government's water safety plans did not protect against industrial spills. Perhaps it's for the same reason the government refuses to approve a water safety plan that would regulate pipelines.

Why won't the government put public safety ahead of private interests and approve this plan to protect the drinking water of more than half of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The plans are in the process. As I said, by the end of the year, half of the water protection plans will be implemented. At the end of next year, all 22 of the plans will be implemented, so they are in process. That work is under way. They have to be finalized in order for them to be approved.

It's measures like these that are making us a leader in source water protection. Quite frankly, all over the world there are jurisdictions that are looking to us for our clean water technology. When I travelled to China, there were businesses that were coming with us who have developed clean water technology because of the regulation, because of the system that we've put in place in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we are leading the pack on this. Not all the plans are approved yet; that is absolutely true. In terms of the pipeline, the member opposite will know that just a couple of weeks ago, we signed an agreement with Quebec that we are putting some principles in place to make sure that environmental protections are put in place around the pipeline.

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Scarborough.

Mr. Mike Colle: Southwest. You forgot about southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Southwest. Scarborough is big. Southwest.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It is a nice place to go.

Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. According to the 2011 census, almost a quarter of First Nations people in Canada live in Ontario—more than any other province. Some 80% of the aboriginal population of Ontario lives off-reserve, with 62% residing in urban centres.

Aboriginal people living in urban centres experience lower socio-economic status and poorer quality of life

than the non-aboriginal population in Ontario. Approximately 37,000 aboriginal people are living in Toronto alone, including Scarborough Southwest, with large populations in Ottawa, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and throughout Toronto.

Mr. Speaker, through to the minister, what is our government doing to support urban aboriginal communities across the province?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for the question. Aboriginal people living in urban areas face unique challenges like higher unemployment rates, lower health status and a lower rate of high school education compared to non-aboriginal peoples.

Over the past two years, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs has undertaken a variety of initiatives to understand and alleviate some of these challenges. We have established the off-reserve aboriginal policy engagement table with the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres, the Ontario Native Women's Association and the Métis Nation of Ontario, all this with a view to support policy development aimed at fostering sustainable, healthy and resilient urban aboriginal communities.

We will work with partners to closely develop and identify the work going forward. For 2014-15, the table's priority will focus on exploring policy opportunities related to literacy supports to urban and off-reserve aboriginal peoples.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary. I apologize to the member from Scarborough Southwest; I should have said those last two pieces.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate it very much. Scarborough Southwest rarely gets mentioned in this House, but it's nice to hear you say it today.

Thank you, Minister. It's great to hear such good news. This really points out that the whole government approach that Ontario is taking to support the aboriginal community is being done properly. We know that a constructive, co-operative relationship with aboriginal people in Ontario leads to improved opportunities and a better future—not only for aboriginal people, but for all people living in Ontario, including Scarborough Southwest.

I am aware that this year we launched the Urban Aboriginal Action Plan. I just want to ask the minister: Could you please inform the House how the action plan will continue to support urban aboriginal people in Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: I want to thank the member from Scarborough Southwest for that follow-up question.

Look, the Urban Aboriginal Action Plan will support urban aboriginal communities by providing \$2.5 million in funding over the next three years to develop strategies that reflect local interests and lead to the improvement of local socio-economic outcomes. And we will coordinate an engagement strategy with aboriginal peoples, municipalities, and the federal government—if they'll ever come to the table—to be able to better deliver program-ming directed towards aboriginal communities.

We also have selected two demonstration projects for community development initiatives in the next year. We will be partnering with the North Bay friendship centre to implement its strategic plan and we will also be working with the Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle to conduct a community-driven needs-assessment plan to research and develop a strategic plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Nice answer.

New question?

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: To the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: The Housing Services Corp. makes their money from charging affordable housing providers a premium on gas and insurance. In 2013, the CEO earned over \$300,000—double what the CEO made four years ago—plus expenses of \$65,000. That's enough to reopen seven affordable housing units that are boarded up because of disrepair. The chair of the board gets \$375 per conference call. Minister, these are just two examples. This money was designated for affordable housing.

Will you ask the Auditor General to perform a value-for-money audit to find out where this money is going?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I appreciate the question. I'll tell you exactly—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's extortion.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no, no. I want to bring it to your attention first. The member from Renfrew will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): By the way, I think there's a W behind your name on my list.

Carry on.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to respond, Mr. Speaker. When the Housing Services Corp. was set up by the previous government, there were no accountability provisions at all. In 2013, we brought in accountability provisions, including the requirement to file full reports with us, reports that I read.

When I read the report and discovered some anomalies, I wrote to the board. The board chairman wrote back to indicate to me that they will be complying with the expense regulations of cabinet and the other bodies here. One of the board—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

1140

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Haldimand—Norfolk on a point of order.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, I know it's not a point of order, but I do wish to introduce, in the members' gallery, Graham Lloyd and also Bill Emmott, the six-year chair of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, you're right, it's not a point of order, but he's from my riding so I'll let it go.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier on a point of order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As this is our last opportunity to have our morning chat between 10:30 and 11:30 in 2014, I just want to take this opportunity to wish everyone in the House and staff and everyone who's here a very happy holiday.

I know that members are going back to their ridings and there's a lot of work to be done between now and the real break, but I do hope that you will have an opportunity to spend time with your friends and families. Thank you very much, all of you, for the service that you provide to the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd like to recognize the leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I too want to join with the Premier and with, I'm sure, the leader of the third party in wishing everyone a merry Christmas and a happy holidays and, if possible, some prosperity in the new year.

On behalf of the PC caucus, happy holidays and happy Hanukkah to all the people of Ontario. May you enjoy the warmth of the season and the gathering of good friends and family as you celebrate the birth of Christ.

On that note, Premier, if you're thinking of giving me a Christmas gift—which I hope you are—all you have to do is pass my Christmas Tree Day Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'd also like to recognize the leader of the third party on the same point of order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The holidays are a time for friends and for family, for cherishing our relationships, for rekindling old relationships and perhaps establishing new ones.

On behalf of New Democrats, I want to express our desire that everyone who is involved in this Legislature, whether it's as staff, as members, as pages—in fact, all Ontarians—we want to wish you all some peace, some joy, some prosperity for the future.

Most of all, I want to say that I hope everyone has a safe holiday season, one that has a lot of joy, but one that is also a safe one.

Season's greetings and happy holidays to everyone.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do know that the member from Prince Edward—Hastings has a point of order. I opened up a Pandora's box, I believe.

Mr. Todd Smith: I have no Christmas greetings, but I do wish everybody a merry Christmas and a happy holiday.

I just received a note from a former colleague of ours here at the Legislature, Rob Milligan, the former member

from Northumberland—Quinte West. He was bringing his grade 10 civics class, along with Mrs. Caroline Campbell, down to view our question period this morning, but they're stuck on the 401 in the winter storm out there. I'm sure that the crew, when they arrive, will be visiting our transportation minister just wondering where that extra equipment is on our highways.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the spirit of the House—and the cringing of the table, because I'm actually supposed to be moving right into deferred votes—I want to announce to the members a very special and sorrowful note: This is the last day for our pages, and I think we should say to them—

Interjections: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure that you will join me in saying thank you very much to our pages for the work that they've done.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you very much. There still is some business to do.

DEFERRED VOTES

BETTER BUSINESS CLIMATE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 VISANT À INSTAURER UN CLIMAT PLUS PROPICE AUX AFFAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 7, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'obligation de faire rapport concernant la réduction des fardeaux administratifs et la Loi de 2014 sur les partenariats pour la création d'emplois et la croissance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1145 to 1150.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Barrett, Toby
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Gravelle, Michael
Gretzky, Lisa
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Hillier, Randy
Hoggarth, Ann
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hudak, Tim
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Kiwala, Sophie
Lalonde, Marie-France

Milczyn, Peter Z.
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick
Oraziatti, David
Pettapiece, Randy
Potts, Arthur
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy

Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne

Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLeod, Lisa
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Martins, Cristina
Martow, Gila
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McDonnell, Jim
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine

Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanhof, John
Vernile, Daiene
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 88; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

SECURITY FOR COURTS, ELECTRICITY GENERATING FACILITIES AND NUCLEAR FACILITIES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES TRIBUNAUX, DES CENTRALES ÉLECTRIQUES ET DES INSTALLATIONS NUCLÉAIRES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 35, Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

Mr. Mike Colle: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Same vote?

Interjection: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On December 10, Mr. Flynn moved third reading of Bill 35. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Arnott, Ted
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Barrett, Toby

Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hillier, Randy
Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hudak, Tim
Hunter, Mitzie

Milczyn, Peter Z.
Miller, Norm
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Nicholls, Rick

Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gravelle, Michael

Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Kiwala, Sophie
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLeod, Lisa
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Martow, Gila
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McDonnell, Jim
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine

Oraziotti, David
Pettapiece, Randy
Potts, Arthur
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vernile, Daiene
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han
Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
French, Jennifer K.
Gates, Wayne

MacLeod, Lisa
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Martins, Cristina
Martow, Gila
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McDonnell, Jim
McGarry, Kathryn
McMahon, Eleanor
McMeekin, Ted
Meilleur, Madeleine

Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Vernile, Daiene
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakubski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 89; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bisson, Gilles
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
French, Jennifer K.

Gates, Wayne
Gretzky, Lisa
Hatfield, Percy
Horwath, Andrea
Mantha, Michael

Miller, Paul
Natyshak, Taras
Sattler, Peggy
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 73; the nays are 15.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have another deferred vote, a vote on the motion by Mr. Gravelle respecting Sir John A. Macdonald. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1158 to 1159.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Gravelle has moved that, on the occasion of the upcoming bicentennial of his birth, this House commemorates the contribution to Canada of its founding father and first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Anderson, Granville
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Baker, Yvan
Balkissoon, Bas
Ballard, Chris
Barrett, Toby
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant

Gravelle, Michael
Gretzky, Lisa
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Hatfield, Percy
Hillier, Randy
Hoggarth, Ann
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Hudak, Tim
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jones, Sylvia
Kiwala, Sophie
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy

Milczyn, Peter Z.
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick
Oraziotti, David
Pettapiece, Randy
Potts, Arthur
Qaadi, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Scott, Laurie

SEASON'S GREETINGS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do want to take liberty and indicate to you that I wish all of you a merry Christmas, season's greetings and a happy new year. Take care of your families. Make sure that they are taken care of because they take care of you. I thank all of you for the work that you do in this province. Thank you very much.

This House stands recessed.

The House recessed from 1203 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce the brother of page Mikaila Nuhra. Her brother is Mark Nuhra. Mark isn't here right now because of the weather, but he is on his way from Leamington, and we look forward to seeing him a little bit later on in the chamber.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I am pleased to inform the House that the FIT contract for the Conestogo Wind Energy project has been terminated, effectively ending the project.

This is nothing less than a victory for those who did not want industrial wind turbines imposed on their communities. It's a victory for the grassroots organizers who worked tirelessly to preserve their neighbourhoods, farms and their way of life. They prevailed over a multinational wind company, as well as the Liberal government, whose process was rigged against them. That's extraordinary.

It's also a victory for the municipality of North Perth and the township of Perth East. They stood with their

constituents as unwilling hosts. I was proud to serve them at every step. I have repeatedly spoken up for them to two Premiers, three energy ministers, two environment ministers and to Invenenergy itself. I hosted and attended public meetings, and wrote to the government about 500 times.

Tragically, the victory came at a cost. The individuals, families and municipalities have spent considerable time and money. They will never get it back. All this could have been avoided if the government had just listened to us in the first place.

We know the Liberals' Green Energy Act has been an absolute failure. This legislation put the Conestogo wind farm proposal in motion, dividing our community and pitting neighbour against neighbour. Now, it is time to heal the rifts this project has caused. I look forward to working with the community to help make that happen.

SEASON'S GREETINGS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: 'Tis the break before Christmas—

and all through this House ...

The members are thinking of turkey, not grouse.

Up in the press gallery, I'll wager a bet

The scribes are all gone, you'll find no ink-stained wretch.

Some ministers are either in hiding—or—

Making their way back to their ridings.

My supposition—that here in the opposition we are sticking it out ...

Still firmly believing we actually have clout.

And Speaker—we do—as I'm sure you have heard ...

We usually find a way to get in the last word.

'Tis a wonderful season, in this legislative place ...

When we set aside our differences, and actually are seen with a smile on our face.

Oh, we may have huff and puff—and pretend real rages ...

But always being careful not to scare our young pages.

Yes—we can be persistent—but we'd really be lost—

without our legislative assistants.

Speaker, even you, sir, you're quite the agreeable fellow ...

But you'd be lost if it wasn't for Clerk Miss Debbie Deller.

Applause.

Interjection: Not done yet.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Members will know I live near the American border—

But I haven't yet heard, "The member for Windsor-Tecumseh will please come to order."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Being here is quite an education—

I'm learning more than I ever expected about time allocation.

So I better wrap up and be on my way,

I'll see you on that February Tuesday after Family Day.

Yes, here's where I'll be—

Yours truly, the member from Windsor-Tecumseh.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can agree with most of what you said.

Members' statements.

SANTA CLAUS PARADES IN CAMBRIDGE

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's hard to top that one. I'm wondering if the member from Windsor-Tecumseh can sing the following: "Children laughing, people passing, meeting smile after smile." The lyrics of the traditional song Silver Bells capture the spirit of the three annual Santa Claus parades in my riding of Cambridge. Hundreds of hours put in by many spirited volunteers make these much loved parades continue to be a highlight of the holiday season for Cambridge and North Dumfries families.

The Cambridge Santa Claus Parade, held at night, is a magical experience for children. It's organized by volunteer Dave Howell and over 35 dedicated community members. Parade-goers assist others by bringing food for the Cambridge Self Help Food Bank, and Canada Post letter carriers pick up the children's letters to Santa.

The village of Ayr parade is organized by volunteers from the North Dumfries Lions Club. The Ayr-Paris Band, a favourite for over 125 years, kept the beat as I handed out candy to the kids.

Hespeler Santa Claus Parade marshals Peggy and Russell Bygrave, volunteers for over 30 years, stand out in white top hats and suits.

A sponsor summed up the reason that he volunteers: "It is every business's duty to help support local traditions and build community. This is a great cause to support. Besides, we can't say no to Santa, can we?"

Generations of children and families in Cambridge would certainly agree. Thank you to all the Cambridge parade volunteers.

CHATHAM GOODFELLOWS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: In 1954, the Chatham Goodfellows embarked on its first annual campaign to ensure there is "No Child Without a Christmas." Through donations and volunteer efforts, the Goodfellows have helped brighten many on Christmas morning, ensuring there are toys for children and food for a holiday meal.

Recently, I was privileged to speak at their 60th anniversary and to see the large number of people in support of the work that the Chatham Goodfellows do. It was very encouraging, to say the least.

But on a sad note, last month, \$3,700 worth of toys slated to be given to local children in need as Christmas gifts were stolen from the Chatham Goodfellows. On a happier note and in the spirit of Christmas, volunteers were not discouraged and they have received an out-

pouring of community support. Chatham-Kent residents donated over 50 banana boxes full of toys and non-perishable food, and they raised over \$35,000 in only a couple of hours during the Chatham Goodfellows 60th annual porchlight campaign. For one night, a small army of volunteers walked door to door collecting donations.

Back in the early 1960s, my father, Fred Nicholls, was a Goodfellow and he worked closely with his good friend and then president of the Chatham Goodfellows, Jay Vickers. I wasn't even a teenager when my father recruited me. I remember standing on the corner of King and 5th Streets just outside the then Royal Bank selling Goodfellow papers to help raise money so that the Goodfellows could buy toys and put food in their Christmas baskets for the less fortunate families. Yes, Speaker, at a very young age, I learned how important in life it is to offer a hand up to those in need. Personal values were being instilled.

I also remember, though, how cold those wintry, snowy days were while I stood outside, but what I would do is I would go into the Goodfellows trailer parked on King Street to enjoy a nice heated drink of, yes, Vernors. Yes, I said heated. You should try it; you'll like it. It was good. Throw a cinnamon stick in while you're at it.

During the first 60 years of operation, thousands of volunteers from the Chatham Goodfellows have helped thousands of families. Despite the growth and success of the Chatham Goodfellows, their premise has always been and will remain: "No Child Without a Christmas."

HOMES 4 WOMEN

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Housing-first approaches to ending homelessness are founded on the principle that people are better able to move forward with their lives if they are first housed, then provided with the services and supports they need. Evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of housing first is based on research—research primarily focused on men.

But women's experience of homelessness is different. It is often invisible and frequently involves children. Women who experience homelessness have higher rates of mortality than men and are less likely to access resources and services. When they do access these resources, women are less successful in maintaining stable housing, with success rates of less than 50%.

To address these gender differences, an innovative collaboration is under way in my community of London to develop a housing-first strategy that responds to women's unique needs for relational supports rooted in the neighbourhoods in which they reside. Called Homes 4 Women, this two-year project is funded by the London Community Foundation. Partners include the Canadian Mental Health Association Middlesex, My Sisters' Place; Women's Community House and Health Zone Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinic.

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The project will provide housing for 50 women, with a variety of units scattered throughout the community. A

housing stability worker will provide individualized supports and a 24/7 hotline. A housing coordinator will ensure coordination across the units and connection with community partners.

Not only will Homes 4 Women improve women's ability to find and maintain stable housing in London, but it will also generate a new housing-first framework that can be shared across Canada to end homelessness among women.

MISSISSAUGA TRANSITWAY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Mr. Speaker, recently, I was at the opening of the Mississauga Transitway's rapid bus phase 1 at the new Dixie station, in my great riding of Mississauga—Brampton South.

Phase 1 is the end result of extensive planning and preparation by all levels of government. Our government has invested \$65 million towards resolving one of the most pressing issues: gridlock. Over the next three years, by 2017, 18 kilometres of transitway from east to west, with 12 stations, will become a reality. The transitway will be a great two-way artery, facilitating movement of people, vehicles and commerce in and out of Mississauga. It is a complement to existing transportation routes and systems. It will integrate suburban areas with urban and encourage more use of public transit.

I'm proud to be a part of a government that is taking action to solve the problem of gridlock. This is a perfect example of what communities can achieve when all levels of government work together.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise today to provide the Legislature and the people of Ontario with an end-of-session report card on the Liberal government.

With regard to working together, the Liberal government gets a failing grade. Way back when this Parliament first started, the government House leader asked for some co-operation between the opposition parties on getting consensus and getting some bills passed.

Initially, it was four bills that the government wanted passed, then it went to six and then it went to seven. We, on this side, were going to allow a number of bills to move forward quickly in the legislative process, but there were a few that needed public input, such as the tow truck operators, the blood plasma companies and also independent daycare operators.

But what we learned was that the government House leader's request to work with us was just a shallow promise. In fact, the corner office, the Premier, shut us down at every opportunity to have those hearings. I can't believe that we can't, in this Legislature, sit down and get a few private members' bills passed.

In our caucus, we had Ryan's Law from Mr. Yurek, Bill 20, that I think could have been easily passed; from the NDP, Bill 17, in the name of the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, for child performers. There

were a number of Liberal bills as well. There was a bill on the Hispanic Heritage Month from the member for Davenport; Ms. McMahon's Ontario Bike Month; Mr. Qaadri regarding radon awareness; and Mr. Potts on his tip-out bill. There were a lot of bills we could have co-operated on.

As far as I'm concerned, the government received an F. One of the members said that they believe in transparency at only the right time. Well, you know what? The right time has passed, and for that reason, they get a failing grade.

SNOW QUEEN 2014

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize a young talented Scarborough–Agincourt resident, Sachil Patel, a former student at Stephen Leacock Collegiate, in his fourth year at Ryerson University, whom I've known since 2006.

For his final thesis project, Sachil and his fellow students at the Ryerson school of media are producing Snow Queen 2014, a community benefit to support the 519 Church Street Community Centre. Snow Queen is a live 60-minute holiday-themed production with drag and musical performances at the Winter Garden Theatre that will take place tomorrow, December 12.

For over 35 years, the 519 has been working with the LGBTQ community to build healthy, welcoming spaces to meet, participate and celebrate together. The production of Snow Queen received significant sponsorship from Ryerson University president Dr. Sheldon Levy and notable LGBTQ organizations. The students themselves also raised additional funds on their own to help cover the costs of producing the show.

I'd like to congratulate Sachil Patel and all his classmates for producing Snow Queen 2014. Their dedication to the LGBTQ community in Toronto is an inspiration to all residents, especially young people, in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, and tomorrow I'm looking forward to seeing the production of Snow Queen 2014.

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to stand up as the last members' statement of this session and to talk about something that's most appropriate, the Christmas tree-lighting ceremonies I've had to enjoy.

Recently, Mr. Speaker, I participated in your own Christmas lighting when we lit up lights across the country at a certain time. When I was able to bring greetings on behalf of the Premier, I was delighted to do so.

Two weeks ago, I was down at Danforth and Victoria Park at the East Lynn Park, where DECA, the Danforth East Community Association, had its own tree-lighting ceremony. We were entertained by a bunch of wonderful children. Angela Match set up that facility. We had Pegasus Studios and Zero Gravity Circus. We lit up the lights; it was most inspiring.

On that same day, I went down to the foot of Leuty Avenue, on the boardwalk in the Beach, and there we had

an incredible ceremony where we lit up the Leuty lighthouse. For those of you who have seen my Christmas card, that's the Leuty lighthouse, with those wonderful trees in the background.

The DeClute real estate family for the last 10 years has been lighting up the Beach. It was an unbelievable event, with Liona Boyd, the first lady of guitar, and I singing *Here Comes Santa Claus*.

Finally, there I was at Kew Gardens last week with the Beaches Lions Club. What an incredible organization doing such good work in our community and around the world. There we were, joined by Mr. and Mrs. Claus.

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, all of these tree-lighting ceremonies have certainly filled my heart with seasonal joy. I am looking forward so much to sharing this time with my community and with my family. I want to wish all members a merry Christmas, season's greetings, happy Hanukkah, and to all a good break.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

MOTIONS

SELECT COMMITTEE ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice to establish the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, and that the question be put without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that a select committee be appointed to make recommendations to the Legislature with respect to prevention of sexual violence and harassment and to improving our response to Ontarians who have experienced sexual violence and harassment.

That the committee shall make efforts to include diverse voices, including those of young people, aboriginal people, visible minorities, LGBTQ, seniors and people with disabilities;

That the committee shall consider ways to shift social norms and other barriers which prevent people who have experienced sexual violence and harassment from coming forward;

That the committee shall offer witnesses the option to testify in camera;

That the committee shall meet on Wednesdays following routine proceedings until 6 p.m.;

That the committee is authorized to meet at the call of the Chair but must recess during the oral question period when meeting at Queen's Park;

That the committee shall present, or if the House is not sitting, shall release by depositing with the Clerk of the

House, an interim report by June 4, 2015, and a final report by December 10, 2015.

That the committee shall have the authority to travel within Ontario;

The committee may seek the advice of experts and those with experience of sexual violence and harassment for the purpose of developing recommendations.

That, notwithstanding standing order 113(a), the committee shall be composed of six members from the government, one of whom shall be the Chair, two members from the official opposition, one of whom shall be the Vice-Chair, and two members from the third party;

That the House leaders of each of the recognized parties shall indicate in writing to the Clerk of the House, no later than January 9, 2015, their party's membership on the committee, including the names of the members who shall be Chair and Vice-Chair of the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader moves that a select committee be appointed to make recommendations to the Legislature with respect to prevention of sexual violence and harassment and to improving our response to Ontarians who have experienced sexual violence and harassment.

That the committee shall make efforts to include diverse voices, including those of young people, aboriginal people, visible minorities, LGBTQ—

Hon. David Zimmer: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense.

Do we agree? Agreed. Carried.

Motion agreed to.

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VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before I do move—this is a little unorthodox, but because of the weather, I'm going to take a moment to introduce, in the east public gallery, Mr. Rob McMillan, Northumberland—Quinte West in the 40th Parliament. Congratulations. Welcome.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Milligan. I think I said "McMillan"—Milligan.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I will do the honourable thing: I apologize.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PAN AM GAMES

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I rise in the Legislature today, here on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, to join my colleague Minister Coteau in telling the House of our government's efforts

to ensure aboriginal people in Ontario fully participate in and benefit from the Toronto 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games.

A few weeks ago, Minister Coteau and I attended an event hosted by the Law Society of Upper Canada. The theme of the evening was sport, reconciliation and healing.

At the event, a segment of the film *FrontRunners* was shown. It's a documentary, and it tells the story of 10 First Nations teenagers who were selected to participate in the torch relay opening in the 1967 Pan Am/Parapan Am Games in Winnipeg. Several of the frontrunners—about four or five of them, six of them—were on hand at that event.

These exceptional young First Nation athletes carried the torch—they ran the torch—over 800 kilometres from St. Paul, Minnesota, in the United States, to Winnipeg. But when they arrived at the stadium carrying the torch for the opening ceremony, they were not allowed to enter the stadium with the torch. Instead, the torch was taken from them and that honour of running the torch around the stadium was given to a non-aboriginal runner.

Thirty-two years later, the Pan Am Games returned to Winnipeg. At this time, the province of Manitoba issued an apology to those 10 teenaged runners. As an act of reconciliation, these men were then invited to carry the torch into the stadium to mark the opening of the 1999 games some 32 years later.

This story is particularly powerful to me, because it speaks to the importance of reconciliation and the power of sport to heal relationships and unite us all.

Here in Ontario, we are making progress by working together with our aboriginal partners in the Toronto region. The 2015 games represent an incredible opportunity for aboriginal people to participate in and benefit from an event that is taking place on their traditional territories here in Ontario.

Now I'd like to invite my colleague Minister Coteau to tell us in detail about some of the initiatives that he is undertaking as the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further comments? The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and the minister responsible for the 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that.

I'm pleased to take a few minutes today to talk about the Toronto 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games and the contributions of the aboriginal community to this historic event that's going to take place.

Next summer's games are inclusive and celebrate the rich diversity and the history of this province that we are so fortunate to have. I'm pleased to tell the members of this House that the aboriginal community is a full partner of this great event that's taking place. Celebrating the unique aboriginal spirit through our culture and sport and legacy initiatives is a priority for our government during these games. Our promotion, celebration and legacy

strategy includes investments in the aboriginal community.

Last month, myself and the minister responsible for aboriginal affairs announced that Ontario is investing half a million dollars into an aboriginal pavilion that will provide programming and cultural events during the Pan Am Games. We're so proud of this investment as a government, as ministers. We believe that the pavilion will be a gathering place for the aboriginal community and visitors to come together to learn about the traditional and the contemporary aboriginal culture and their achievements.

This undertaking is possible because of the involvement of the Aboriginal Leadership Partners, the ALP. The ALP is a collective of 14 First Nations and aboriginal organizations driving the planning, engagement and communications between the TO2015 games organizing committee and the aboriginal committee to deliver a successful games, a games that is inclusive and respectful.

I was very moved and excited about some of the inspiring stories from the aboriginal heroes of the past attached to these games, and, of course, contemporary participants in the games. For the 2015 games, Waneeck Horn-Miller, an aboriginal woman from the Kahnawake Mohawk territory, will be an assistant chef de mission for Team Canada during the games. Ms. Horn-Miller won a gold in the 1999 Pan Am Games as a member of the national women's water polo team. Her achievements in life and in sport and her strong mentorship will no doubt inspire the next generation of athletes here in Ontario and across this country.

Another incredible aboriginal athlete's story will be on display through an art installation, a statue that will be at the aboriginal pavilion next summer. Tom Longboat, a member of the Onondaga Nation, was born on the Six Nations reserve and was one of the most successful athletes in the early 20th century. He was a distance runner who won most major events and set a spectacular record as an Olympian. He was also a war hero. I was very excited to hear about the art installation in honour of his achievements at the games next summer. This will be a stunning tribute to his legacy as a Canadian.

We are proud that these games present a forum for learning for all Canadians, and we are proud of the legacy that these games will leave on our aboriginal community and Ontario.

In March, the province announced the transfer of a section of land in the West Don Lands, home to the athletes' village, to Anishnawbe Health Toronto, who will utilize this site to house an aboriginal community health centre and urban aboriginal community hub.

Speaker, the 2015 games are important not only to the infrastructure investment of this province, the job creation and tourism, but also for the celebration of our rich diversity and our history.

I'm also proud that the aboriginal community is taking such an important role in these games. These games will be a source of pride for all Ontarians and Canadians, especially when we celebrate our rich aboriginal history

and past here in this province. We look forward to these games and the full participation of all communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries?

It is now time for responses.

Mr. Todd Smith: I rise today in the House to acknowledge the many important roles that members of our aboriginal community have played in the history of Canadian sport and our culture here. It's important that we have moments like this in the House, because we need to recognize both the importance of our history as a province and the role that we can still play in fostering a better future for all Ontarians.

One of the constituencies that I'm proud to represent in Prince Edward-Hastings is the Mohawks of the Bay of Quinte and their territory, so I have first-hand experience with the many important contributions that our First Nations people have made to our sporting culture.

As the minister has pointed out, the games that take place next summer will be on the traditional lands of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. The games' organizers have gone to great lengths to ensure that visitors to the games next year will have the ability to experience exhibits, concerts and performances by members of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. Both ministers just spoke about some of the pavilions that will be available for spectators and visitors to our province for the games to take in. I'm very excited to hear that.

The history, rituals and culture of our First Nations are the foundation blocks of our history as a country. It's only fitting that when we act as emissaries to the sporting world next year, we provide a glimpse into the rich cultural and sporting history of this country, and we simply could not do that without putting our First Nations people front and centre.

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The ministers have spoken of some of the great aboriginal competitors that we've had in various games over the years, and those will be highlighted as a part of the games and in those pavilions. Some of the nation's greatest sporting traditions have their roots right here in First Nations communities. By engaging our First Nations people in next year's Pan Am celebrations, we're giving the world the ability not only to enjoy the performances of great amateur athletes from Canada and abroad, but the ability to understand where sport in Canada has its roots.

While the management of the games are often the subject of much division and some argument in the House, we don't take a partisan stance on functions of the games like what we're talking about here today. We don't take opposing stances on supporting the athletes or the volunteers. We don't take opposing stances on engaging our First Nations people as part of the Pan Am and Parapan Games; the reason that we don't is because those elements of these games are selfless. They're done not for legacy or publicity; they're done because of a common belief in the better purpose that they serve.

These athletes train religiously for the honour of wearing their country's colours. Our volunteers show up every day because they want an experience that contributes to celebrating what Canada's athletes mean to all of us. We engage our First Nations in what truly is the largest multi-sport event in Canadian history because it acknowledges that our sporting tradition in Canada is largely descended from those First Nations communities.

We should also take this opportunity to recognize the many First Nations athletes that have contributed to improving sports in this country, and the minister has just given a snapshot as to some of those great performances over the years, and I'm sure we'll hear more about them when the games roll around in July.

Next year, the athletes of the Americas will be coming to Toronto. They'll spend part of their summer in Canada's largest city. But they'll take part in events on the traditional lands of First Nations across the province, in Oshawa, Minden and St. Catharines. It's an honour for the games to have the Mississaugas of the New Credit as the host First Nation.

I believe I said Minden; I meant to say Milton. I'll correct my record before having to correct my record.

As I've said, there are things about these games that are contentious and that the minister and I frequently disagree on, but this doesn't come close to being one of them. We have a rich history in this country; perhaps it's one of our Canadian traits that we so regularly boast about. Using the Pan Am Games as a vehicle to highlight these important elements of our history does an honour to the city of Toronto and to the athletes that wear Canada's colours because it helps them tell the world a little bit more about our story here in Canada and here in Ontario.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I want to share my time with our critic for the Pan Am Games, but I just want to say this. I think it's fitting that we do everything that we can in order to be able to assist our First Nations brothers and sisters to be able to be full participants in our economy and full participants in what is the social and cultural mosaic of—not mosaic, but part of what Ontario is all about.

I want to just tell this story. I remember when Mr. Cheechoo, the hockey player—his first name, I should know—

Mr. Todd Smith: Jonathan.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Jonathan. I know too many Cheechoos. I was going to say Gilbert, who is a good friend of mine.

Well, when Jonathan Cheechoo made it to the NHL, the great hockey player that he is, it was to see the pride in the faces of the kids back on the James Bay coast, not only in Moosonee but across all of the James Bay coast, to be able to see that one of theirs was a star in the NHL and was doing such great things and giving them a source of pride; but, more importantly, giving them a sense of hope that maybe one day they'll be able to be lifted from the life that they live in and live that experience that Mr. Cheechoo has found.

I hear what the minister is saying, and I don't want to be critical and I'm not going to use this to be partisan—I

don't think it's the time or the place. But I think it goes beyond just doing this; it's doing the things that are right so that we can help the lives of aboriginal people in our province.

You've heard me speak on a number of occasions in this House, saying that the conditions that First Nations live in, in many of the communities in Ontario, are worse than the Third World. I think we all have a responsibility in this House to figure out, in the little way that we can ourselves, to make that life a better place.

I want to take the occasion to thank the Minister of Community and Social Services, Helena Jaczek. I went to her about three weeks ago in regard to an issue with the First Nations people of Kashechewan who were evacuated into Kapuskasing. They had lost their northern allowance. For them, it meant they couldn't buy food; they couldn't buy Christmas presents for their kids; they couldn't have a little bit of hope to enjoy what all of us take for granted.

We have a responsibility, I, as the member who represents them, but, more importantly, her, Helena—and I'll use the word "Helena," because I see you as a friend—as the minister responsible for the crown, and she moved heaven and earth to make sure that the kids of Kashechewan living in Kapuskasing can actually have a Christmas.

Those are the little things that we all can do in order to make sure that our First Nations friends are able to live in this province and feel that they're not left behind, that we really do care, and we really do want to make their lives a better place.

To the minister, I thank you, because I think it was the right thing to do. On behalf of the constituents, thumbs up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I too would like to mention Tom Longboat. Tom was from the Hamilton area. I've had the honour and privilege of playing against some of his nieces and nephews in hockey, baseball, you name it. I've even refereed some of their games.

I'll tell you, I have the greatest respect for aboriginal athletes. This is no pun intended: A lot of times, they got the short end of the stick when it came to recognition. They are excellent athletes. They're competitive, very proud athletes. They make a game of any sort, whether it be lacrosse, hockey or baseball, more exciting too, because of their competitive nature and the fact that they play as a team. They show unity, they show bravery, and they also show ability, which is a nice combination.

I, too, would be remiss if I didn't mention Stan Jonathan. Stan Jonathan was an NHL player with the Boston Bruins. Stan was an enforcer and a very good athlete and played many years for the Boston Bruins. He was also a Hamilton boy.

Jordin Tootoo: I believe he was with LA for a while and he got traded. I think he went to Anaheim. Jordin is a role model for the Inuit and the nations of the north. All kids up there wear his sweater. He goes into communities

and signs autographs. It's like the Pope was visiting, when he goes to these places. He's a hero to the kids, and they love him.

The more hockey equipment and the more resources we can pour into the northern communities that need them, that can't afford them, the more we do.

I remember Howard Hampton used to take a plane-load of used equipment up to the reserves up there, and he was like Santa Claus. It was stuff they could use and utilize and better their abilities.

I encourage constant involvement by the aboriginal communities, because they bring a lot to sports. Over the years, they certainly did not get their fair shake when it came to recognition. I hope this is all going to change in the year of the Pan Am/Parapan Games.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention this, as the Speaker—I don't think he would mind, the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek—that Stan Jonathan was from Six Nations, and that is in my riding. But it's in the Hamilton area, so I'll give him that, along with Tom Longboat as well.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We're so parochial around here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So parochial.

I thank all members for their statements here today.

PETITIONS

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas post-secondary students requiring a vehicle to commute to campus receive less OSAP funding if the cost of their vehicle is higher than the assessment exemption level;

"Whereas many students in rural, suburban and northern communities require a vehicle to commute as public transit is unavailable;

"Whereas in 2012-13, 4% of OSAP single student applicants reported owning a vehicle worth more than their exemption level of \$5,000;

"Whereas in the same year, 20% of married and sole-support OSAP applicants reported owning a vehicle worth more than their exemption level of \$10,000;

"Whereas in February 2014, the government of Canada removed the student vehicle assessment from the Canada student loans program to better reflect the needs of students who commute or work while studying;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities recognize the current realities facing post-secondary students in Ontario by removing the student-owned vehicle assessment from OSAP's needs assessment process."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support and send the petition to the table with page Mikaila.

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LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Paul Miller: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data shows that there are more than 30,000 Ontarians waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

"Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care, e.g., to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase this funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

"Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

"(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

"(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will develop a process of registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers."

I agree with this and will affix my name to it.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, signed by people from Mississauga, for which I'm very grateful. It reads as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, a concentration providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentration to protect against adverse health effects; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it down with, on his last day before Christmas with us, ironically, page Nick.

RURAL AND NORTHERN ONTARIO TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the loss of transportation service will further destabilize rural economies and impede on residents' ability to get to school, work, doctor or hospital appointments, or any other service unavailable locally;

"Whereas the prosperity, productivity and participation of all segments of society depends on a viable, accessible transportation network;

"Whereas the lack of a transportation service negatively impacts those people with special needs, accessibility challenges, seniors and those living below the poverty level;

"Whereas there is no secondary carrier serving rural Ontario's students, workers, volunteers, tourists, business travellers and any resident without a driver's licence;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately strike an all-party committee at Queen's Park to study transportation needs in rural and northern Ontario."

I agree with this. I'll send it to the table with page Maja.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: These petitions keep coming in from northern Ontario. It's a vast area. These are from Marathon, up to and including Thunder Bay:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and present it to page Ella to bring down to the Clerks.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Lumley and Popsipil families in my riding. Many others have signed other copies, but this is the one I'm reading.

"Whereas section 23 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees access to publicly funded French-language education; and

"Whereas there are more than 1,000 children attending French elementary schools in east Toronto ... and those numbers continue to grow; and

"Whereas there is no French secondary school ... yet in east Toronto, requiring students wishing to continue their studies in French school boards to travel two hours every day to attend the closest French secondary school ...

"Whereas it is well documented that children leave the French-language system for the English-language system between grades 7 and 9 due to the inaccessibility of French-language secondary schools ...

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged in February 2007 that there is an important shortage of French-language schools in all of Toronto and even provided funds to open some secondary schools ...

"Whereas the commissioner of French-language services stated in a report in June 2011 that '... time is running out to address the serious shortage ...

"Whereas the Ministry of Education has confirmed that we all benefit when school board properties are used effectively in support of publicly funded education ...

"Whereas parents and students from both French Catholic and French public elementary schools in east Toronto are prepared to find common ground across all language school systems to secure space for a French-language secondary school ...

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education assist one or both French school boards in locating a suitable underutilized school building in east Toronto that may be sold or

shared for the purpose of opening a French secondary school ... in the community ... so that French students have a secondary school close to where they live.”

I agree with this petition, sign my name, and leave it with Jenny and wish her a merry Christmas.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas providing patients with access to information about their medical doctor’s treatment history is fundamental to regulating the medical profession and ensuring Ontario’s health-care system is accountable and transparent;

“Whereas currently, Ontario patients do not have access to this information, which is also an important measure to improve patient safety and empower them when making decisions about medical treatment;

“Whereas making public all information about complaints, cautions and remedial action taken against a physician does not diminish the College of Physicians and Surgeons’ ability to self-regulate, but rather brings balance to the relationship between doctors and patients;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care act immediately to implement the transparency and accountability measures contained in Bill 29, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, 1991.”

I’m pleased to sign in support of this petition, and I’ll send it to the table with page Claudia.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, these petitions keep coming in from northern Ontario:

“Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads ‘that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles’;

“Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013, to amend the Highway Traffic Act 316/03;

“Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition, affix my signature and present it to page Mikaila to bring down to the Clerks.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

“Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province’s social, economic and multicultural fabric;

“We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport.”

Mr. Speaker, I couldn’t agree more with this petition—important for all Hispanics in this province.

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ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired;

“Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

“Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

“Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research.”

I agree with this and will send it to the table with my man Tyler.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the customers of Algoma Power, are being charged astronomical costs referred to as ‘delivery fees’;

“Whereas we, the customers of Algoma Power, would like the ‘delivery fees’ looked into and regulated so as to protect the consumer from big businesses gouging the consumer;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Stop Algoma Power’s influx of fees for delivery and stop the onset of increasing these fees another 40% within four years.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and present it to page Moiz to bring down to the Clerk.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition regarding ending coal for cleaner air in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians have growing concerns surrounding climate change and the quality of our air, it is integral that more is done to provide Ontarians with cleaner air;

“Whereas the combustion of coal to generate electricity is conducive toward higher levels of carbon dioxide emissions, which pollute the air and contribute immensely toward climate change;

“Whereas the cessation of coal use as a means of generating electricity in the Atikokan, Lambton, Nanticoke, and Thunder Bay generating facilities will result in cleaner air for Ontarians, which will ensure the long-term preservation of our air, environment, and public health;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 9, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, to stop generating facilities from using coal to produce electricity, which will eliminate high levels of carbon dioxide emissions and will in turn ensure cleaner air for Ontarians now and for future generations,” such as people like Ella, who is the page who will take this after I sign it enthusiastically.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

MILITARY SERVICE PIN

Mr. Steve Clark: I move that, in the opinion of this House, to express the gratitude all Ontarians feel, the Lieutenant Governor’s Military Service Pin should be

established to recognize the sacrifices of Ontarians who have served, or are serving, in Canada’s armed forces with valour and distinction in conflicts around the world to uphold the values of liberty, justice and peace that we all hold dear; and that the pin should be designed to be worn on civilian clothing in order that those who have served may be recognized when they are not in uniform.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Clark has moved private members’ notice of motion number 5. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker.

It’s an honour to rise in debate of my motion to give Ontarians an opportunity to do something we can’t ever do enough, and that is to say thank you to the brave veterans and active duty members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Off the top, I want to say I’m honoured this afternoon, as a friend of my local regiment, to be wearing the regimental tie and pin of the Brockville Rifles. The Rifles—or the Brocks, as we call them at home—will mark their 150th anniversary in 2016, and I’ll have more to say about that later. For now, I’ll just say a proud “semper paratus” to Lieutenant Colonel Shawn Herron and all of the men and women under his command.

The freedom we enjoy today, including the ability of each of us, as MPPs, to take our place in the House, is only due to the sacrifices of those who have served throughout Canada’s history. Let there be no doubt, Speaker: Whenever duty has called, soldiers from communities large and small across Ontario have answered. From the trenches of World War I to Afghanistan and, today, in the Middle East, they have stood shoulder to shoulder with men and women from across Canada. Their sacrifices on battlefields around the world helped forge our proud nation’s independence and Canada’s international reputation as a country that has always been counted on to punch above its weight.

To people around the world, our proud maple leaf flag represents the values of peace, freedom and justice. We must never forget our veterans, the price they paid, and the blood they shed to uphold our values. As the recent tragic events in Ottawa and Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu showed, our Canadian Armed Forces members are as much on guard protecting us at home as they are overseas. They are also the foundation upon which our democratic institutions have been built.

It is often said that we owe our veterans, and those men and women serving in uniform today, a debt of gratitude that can never be repaid. No truer words were ever spoken. Speaker, we know we’ll never balance the ledger, but that does not absolve us of our responsibility and our duty to make regular installments by honouring their service. That’s why I’ve introduced this motion to create a Lieutenant Governor’s Military Service Pin. The pin would be a unique honour, in that it would be designed to be worn on civilian dress by Ontario veterans and active-duty Canadian Armed Forces members.

Since tabling the motion, I’ve had overwhelming support from constituents I meet in the community.

While I'm proud to stand here today to champion this motion and ask for the support of my colleagues on all sides of the House, I have to give credit to the person who inspired it. That person is Roy Brown, a great friend, constituent, supporter, and one of those tireless advocates for veterans. He's one of the most tireless advocates I've ever met in my life.

He's a retired Ottawa police officer whose military involvement began in service with the HMCS Falkland sea cadets, then as a member of the Governor General's Foot Guards, the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps C-class full-time reserve; and a regular member of the Royal Canadian Air Force.

Roy is a 22-year member of the Royal Canadian Legion and he was instrumental in a wonderful project to restore Kemptville Cenotaph. Along with another veteran and outstanding North Grenville citizen, Owen Fitzgerald, he also created the Veterans Way Memorial Committee, a group that oversees a kilometre-long roadway of remembrance in Kemptville's G. Howard Ferguson Forest Centre, and successfully re-created the one-acre Veterans Way Memorial Park.

As I said, few veterans have done more than Roy Brown to honour the service of our veterans.

So that's why he wrote to me last spring, to make me aware of an initiative by the Honourable Vaughn Solomon Schofield, Lieutenant Governor of the province of Saskatchewan. Roy noted that she had established that province's Lieutenant Governor's Military Service Pin last year.

He wrote to me: "May I respectfully request that you promote a similar course of action to recognize the service of our Ontario veterans by encouraging the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Honourable David C. Onley, to consider adopting a comparable military service pin program." From the moment I read this letter, I knew it was an initiative worth pursuing.

Of course, Mr. Onley's distinguished service as Lieutenant Governor ended last year. Certainly, I join all Ontarians and members of the House in thanking him for his outstanding service to our province. As we all know, in September, right here in this chamber, the Honourable Elizabeth Dowdeswell was installed as Ontario's 29th Lieutenant Governor.

I want to stress that I'm very respectful of the fact that the Lieutenant Governor is the cornerstone of our parliamentary democracy. My motion is in no way an attempt to tell Ms. Dowdeswell what to do. I would never, Speaker, be so presumptuous. It is simply an opportunity for this House to show its support for the creation of this new honour.

Ontario's Lieutenant Governor has an important role in the many honours and awards regularly conferred upon exceptional Ontarians who distinguish themselves in a variety of ways. The Lieutenant Governor, for instance, is the honorary chair of Ontario medal programs, including the medal for good citizenship, the medal for young volunteers, the medal for firefighter bravery and the medal for police bravery.

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Ontario's Honours and Awards Program also recognizes leadership in accessibility, volunteer service and senior achievement. Each of these programs is important and allows us to celebrate the commitment of Ontarians to build stronger, healthier and more vibrant communities. These recognitions also serve to inspire other Ontarians to follow in the footsteps of those honourees by becoming active citizens themselves.

But, Speaker, listen: I think we can all agree it's time to add our veterans and those still serving us at home and abroad to that list of outstanding Ontarians to recognize.

Why do I say this? I can think of no better answer than to quote Saskatchewan's Lieutenant Governor on the launch of that province's military service pin: "We created the pin to honour current and former members of our military, and police officers who have served in military operations, for the sacrifices they have made to serve our nation. When these Canadian heroes are in civilian clothing, people simply don't know about what they've done for the world; we hope this lapel pin will identify them to the public so that we can all express our thanks to them."

Speaker, we've all witnessed that special moment when someone spots a soldier in uniform and buys them a cup of coffee or extends a hand to thank them for their service. Who among us has not been moved when seeing young schoolchildren pay tribute to soldiers at Remembrance Day services? This military service pin would give Ontarians a chance to recognize and celebrate that service year round, not only when they see that soldier or veteran in uniform.

The eligibility criteria used in Saskatchewan, where I understand 4,000 pins have been awarded, are straightforward. All recipients must have resided in Saskatchewan at one time, and this includes having lived there for military training or posting. As I've mentioned, it's available to all current and retired members of the Canadian Armed Forces—regular, primary and supplementary reserve forces, including Canadian Rangers.

Saskatchewan has also extended eligibility to current and retired members of police forces, including municipal forces and the RCMP, who have served in military operations.

Finally, on a discretionary basis, the pin may be presented to Saskatchewan residents who are current or former members of allied forces, such as the United States military and those from Commonwealth nations.

That's an example of the sorts of eligibility criteria we could adopt in Ontario.

I think it's also important to hear what Canada's Chief of the Defence Staff, General Tom Lawson, told the crowd at Government House in Regina when the pin was launched on November 5, 2013. He spoke of the great relationship between the military and Saskatchewan, and I would say Ontario has a similar bond with our forces. General Lawson continued: "The initiative to create this pin is a great demonstration of that relationship, and signals the pride you have for your sons and daughters in

uniform who serve with such distinction. On behalf of the Canadian Armed Forces, thank you for your tremendous support.”

That’s the perspective of the Canadian Forces when it comes to this type of honour, and I would hope General Lawson’s words are a strong endorsement for members of this House.

Since I tabled this motion during our summer session, I’ve been pleased to receive support from a number of organizations that support active-duty and retired military personnel.

One of the first endorsements was from the True Patriot Love Foundation, a remarkable organization I’m sure all MPPs are familiar with. The foundation works tirelessly on behalf of veterans, active-duty force members and families from coast to coast. In addition to being an outstanding advocate, True Patriot Love has raised more than \$20 million to support military charities since 2009. So it was an honour when Bronwen Evans, a founding director and current managing director of the foundation, offered the following endorsement of my motion: “We applaud this initiative that recognizes the selfless sacrifices of our members of the Canadian Armed Forces and we believe that it will help inspire all Canadians to appreciate that the freedom we enjoy comes at cost to the men and women who serve us.”

I also received a quick response from Ray Gilroy, who is a constituent and commander of the Royal Canadian Legion Ontario Command, zone G. I asked for his thoughts. He endorsed it. He represents many of the Legion branches in my riding. He fully supports what I’m saying.

Just last week, I heard from Gord Jenkins, president of the NATO Veterans Organization of Canada. They too have pledged their support.

I want to thank each of those organizations and the many others who have encouraged me to bring forward the motion that we are debating today.

Speaker, we’re coming to the end of a truly remarkable year in which Canadians and Ontarians alike have had many occasions to celebrate and honour those who have served. The year 2014 marked the end of Canada’s mission in Afghanistan, a conflict in which 158 soldiers lost their lives, including two from my riding: Corporal Randy Payne of Gananoque and Private Blake Williamson of Kemptville.

This year has also given us the 70th anniversary of D-Day and the 100th anniversary of the First World War.

These special milestones in our history and the tragic recent events on our home soil have helped spark a rebirth of remembrance in our province and our nation. Evidence of this rebirth can be found in the tremendous crowds at this year’s Remembrance Day services. I’m sure all of us noticed those crowds this year and saw the amount of schoolchildren and others who were at our local cenotaphs.

Today, I want to ask for the support of all of our parties, all the members of this Legislature, in an effort to allow the province to pay its respects to these brave men

and women through the creation of the Lieutenant Governor’s Military Service Pin. I hope the members from all three parties will band together. I think this is an incredible initiative, one that, as I said earlier, the province of Saskatchewan has done first. I think we can build upon it. I believe we have a great honours and awards program, and I feel that a military service pin of this type would be an excellent addition to what we already do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I rise with great pleasure, as all New Democrats will who have a chance in this debate, to support this particular motion. I think the point here that is important to say is that unfortunately there are far too many soldiers—him and her—who have served in active duty in the history of our Armed Forces since the time of the Boer War, going back to the turn of the previous century. A number of those people, unfortunately, didn’t make it back; some of them did and had to live with the scars of what happened to them and what they saw when they were actively serving in the Armed Forces in conflicts around the world. But there are many other soldiers such as myself, who served in a peacetime army, who is lucky enough to say that I never had to fire a shot at anybody unless I had a BFE at the end of my gun—a BFE is a blank flash eliminator. Why? Because I served in a peacetime army in the 1970s. We were not at conflict with anybody in the world. That was a good thing. We were doing peace missions around the world, but those were very small contingents as compared to the Armed Forces of the day—which was about 100,000 to 110,000 men and women who served in our Armed Forces at the time. Unfortunately, for people like me—and for me, it’s not a big deal, but for others it may be, and I think we need to recognize that—they don’t have an opportunity, when they go out on Remembrance Day or they attend Legion events or whatever it might be, to show that they actually served in the Armed Forces.

I remember the first time I went to the all-wars banquet in Kapuskasing some years ago as I started to represent that part of the riding—my riding used to be Cochrane South, and it became Timmins—James Bay in 2009, when I ended up gaining the communities along Highway 11 from Smooth Rock Falls going north. I remember going to the all-wars banquet, and they went to the part where they said, “We would like anybody who has served in the Armed Forces of this country to please rise and give their name, rank and serial number.” Of course, these were all vets. At that time, a lot of vets still were living, and a number of people got up and yelled out their name in pride, they yelled out their regiment in pride, they yelled out their SIN number—50 or 60 years later, they still remembered it—and stood in the Legion in Kapuskasing to give that. I got up and said, “Bisson, Private, 445775171, sir.” Everybody was shocked because nobody knew I had served in the Armed Forces. I wasn’t there long, but I did my tour, and I felt proud when I did that. I thought, “This is the first time since I

left the Armed Forces back in 1974 or 1975, whenever it was, that I got to actually say publicly that I was a member of the Armed Forces.”

So for people like me who didn't serve in that conflict, it's an opportunity to be recognized for the service that we did for our country. We weren't in active service. We didn't have to fire at any enemy. What we were doing was training to be the best soldiers we could be for our country in case we were called. Fortunately for me, I was never called. I'm so lucky. So I say to my good friend, the House leader of the Conservative Party, obviously we'll support this bill.

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The last point I want to make, because I want to leave most of the time for my good friend Mr. Mantha, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, is that private members' hour is a description of what he and I have been talking about in this House all this fall. If we could work together as members and actually listen to each other every now and then—a little bit of give, a little bit of take—and not time-allocate everything but actually take the time to see what the value of everybody's position is and the value of what they have to contribute, we could do some really good work. What we see at private members' on Thursday afternoons are members like the member from Leeds-Grenville coming forward with a very good idea that all members of this House, no matter what side of the House they're on, can stand behind and support. I just hope in this time of giving and Christmas, people will remember, hopefully, when we come back here in the next session, that the government will understand that the opposition has something to contribute to this process. That's what parliamentary democracy is based on. It's based on the government being able to govern to get their agenda through, but with an opposition being able to hold that government to account and suggest where they think it's necessary to suggest improvements or change.

To that member, I say thank you for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It is a pleasure and a privilege to speak to what I think is a very fine initiative on behalf of my colleague from Leeds-Grenville. I'm just going to take a little digression to wish him, his caucus, his family and all of those a merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous 2015. I've enjoyed serving with the member, who serves his constituents very well. I hope those comments don't come back on his campaign literature in the next campaign.

To bring up what our colleague from Timmins-James Bay was just talking about, he has brought up a very interesting idea. I think that is, in fact, part of what our Legislature is for. I say “our Legislature” because, as members, it is our Legislature, and when one of us comes up with an idea that's not partisan—it doesn't really pertain to programs and services, but it's just a good idea—this is a good place to talk about it.

Now, the member has presented it in the form of a resolution, which means he hasn't given us a fait accompli to make a decision on. What he has said is, “Let's start a conversation, and let's see whether or not this idea has some merit and some traction.” He has talked about some of the feedback that he has gotten in his own riding in eastern Ontario. I'm sure I would find much the same reaction if I were to go down and bend an elbow with some of the boys at Royal Canadian branch 139 Streetsville and say, “You know, my friend Steve Clark suggested this,” and then describe the notion of the medal. Now, of course, being ex-army guys, they would have a whole bunch of questions that neither of us could really anticipate. I'm sure if we were to ask for the input of Ontario command of the Royal Canadian Legion, they too would say, “We don't mean to either denigrate or criticize the idea, but let's talk about it in terms of the implementation.” That doesn't mean that they find fault with it; it means that they're trying it on and taking some degree of ownership of the issue. I think that's the most important thing here, that we can try it on for size and see whether or not it's a good idea. I think it's a pretty good idea.

For example, would this be retroactive? That's something that we would need to discuss. Does it apply if you're born in Ontario, if you're currently living in Ontario, or if you just passed through Ontario? Those are all valid issues that we would have to wrap our minds around. What if, for example, as a Canadian citizen, you had at one time served in the uniform of either an allied or another Commonwealth nation? Would having done so qualify you for this particular service medal? I think that also is well worth putting on the table and seeing what our legion thinks about it. What would be the ramifications of it?

Canadian tradition has it that we are a nation of citizen-soldiers. The member for Timmins-James Bay was discussing some of the genesis of the Canadian Armed Forces, which were really units raised, very often, by a very committed individual who said, “I'm going to put up the money to do this myself. I'm going to help recruit people, and we're going to take them”—initially it was abroad to South Africa for the Boer War, but even during the First World War there were a lot of regiments that were raised by the initiative of a single-minded, strong-willed individual who said, “We've got to do something here. Those things that we considered dear and those that we cherish are in fact in peril; and if I don't do it, who will?”

We were at the time a much younger country than we are now, and a much smaller country in terms of population and resources, and it showed the kind of initiative that a committed individual was able to take at the time. It's on those traditions that we've built our armed forces and done so in a lot of ways differently from many other nations.

We as a nation were not born in the cauldron of war. By and large, we talked the British out of it; the Americans had to fight them out of it. So that has given rise to a

very different way in which as a nation we have traditionally looked at our armed forces and asked our armed forces to feel about themselves.

When the veterans of World War I came back and formed what they then called the dominion overseas veterans association, which morphed into what we now call the Royal Canadian Legion, initially it was because people couldn't understand what those boys went through while they were over in the trenches in World War I. They started to get together themselves to say, "If nobody else can understand it"—with today's concept of post-traumatic stress syndrome not at the time defined—"if we can get together, we can do this ourselves. We can help ourselves readjust to modern"—at the time—"20th-century civilization."

So we are asked now, should we in fact enable our veterans, who have served us in one capacity or another—a capacity I think the member will agree we have to spend some time defining. Should they choose to wear that on their lapels, as many of us, indeed most of us do, very proudly with our legislative pins? That's an idea that's got a lot of merit. That's an idea that I think we could have a really productive, positive conversation about in this province, and one that I hope gives rise to looking at not merely our veterans who have served in uniform but perhaps some of our people who have served in public service and done their time, very often for a much longer period of time. And when you leave, you know, you think: Okay, you've left; you were the mayor, the reeve, the MPP or the MP, and maybe it's time we could consider that as well because that, too, represents honourable service to the citizens of this province.

I'm voting for this. I would be very interested to see how this conversation and exploration of the subject plays out, and I certainly commend the member for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today in support of my colleague the member from Leeds–Grenville on his motion that would see the government of Ontario establish the Lieutenant Governor's Military Service Pin to recognize those Ontarians who have served or are serving in Canadian Armed Forces.

Canadians are fiercely proud of our veterans and those who serve in our military. Each and every year on Remembrance Day—I have, I think, 17 cenotaphs in my riding alone, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock—I try to attend as many services as I can to honour those people who made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our freedoms. With millions of Canadians wearing a poppy, of course, it's the symbol of our national pride and respect.

During the recent conflict in Afghanistan, thousands of Ontarians would make their way to the Highway of Heroes along Highway 401, from CFB Trenton all the way to Toronto, to pay their respects to the fallen soldiers upon being returned to Canada. Of the Canadian soldiers killed in Afghanistan, 52 were from Ontario, including

two soldiers from my riding: Corporal Nick Bulger, from the 3rd Battalion, Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry; and Corporal Mark McLaren, who attended public school in Omemee and high school at I.E. Weldon in Lindsay.

When we go to the services on Remembrance Day, it's interesting that for years there weren't many around who were Silver Cross mothers. Now we have mothers who have lost children in battle—they're younger than I am—and who are laying the wreaths at the cenotaph.

So I just put that out there to say that at this time there's a renewed sense of appreciation for the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces. It's important that Ontario does recognize the thousands of its citizens who put themselves in harm's way to defend our nation and the values we stand for around the world.

Our Armed Forces also contribute to a variety of domestic initiatives, from search-and-rescue to disaster relief, and all that keeps Canadians safe from harm.

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Creating this honour not only shows the province's appreciation for Ontarians who step forward to serve their country; the fact that it is designed to be worn on civilian dress provides all residents with an opportunity to recognize veterans and active duty personnel and extend their gratitude when they see them.

The pins, as mentioned in the proposed motion, would be available to veterans' organizations such as the Royal Canadian Legion branches and military organizations to present at local ceremonies, providing an opportunity for further recognition in communities across this province. I can tell you that they would be much appreciated in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. We always want opportunities to praise our veterans.

This type of recognition has been done before in other parts of Canada—in Saskatchewan, as the member from Leeds–Grenville mentioned. I think this is a great motion that directs the government to establish the Lieutenant Governor's Military Service Pin to honour current and former members of the Canadian Armed Forces, including reservists from Ontario who served in military operations. I'm getting a sense from the House that it's going to have a very positive vote at the end of today's sitting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's with pleasure that I rise today. When we're speaking about our veterans, I'm always thinking about the Byers and Arnold families from back home. Those families lost—the ultimate sacrifice—their loved ones. When I speak about veterans and speak on behalf of individuals who served, they are always foremost in my thoughts.

I want to thank the member from Leeds–Grenville for his motion to recognize the sentiment of many Ontarians who are wishing to show gratitude for the many sacrifices of Ontarians who have served and are currently serving in the Canadian Armed Forces with the establishment of the Lieutenant Governor's Military Service Pin.

New Democrats stand with all Ontarians in recognizing and reflecting on the sacrifice—including the ultimate sacrifice—of Ontarians who have fought in foreign wars. We acknowledge Canada's long history of international conflict resolution and leadership as peacekeepers around the globe.

I am a proud member of Royal Canadian Legion 561 in Elliot Lake. I enjoy visiting and spending time with the veterans there. I enjoy standing by the bar, maybe dumping down a few drafts, a few cold ones. It's always there that you learn and you see the pain in the eyes of the veterans when you sit down and actually listen to their stories. I have many friends whom I speak to on a regular basis, who tell me their many incredible stories while serving. But they also tell me of the many challenges veterans face across this country.

This week, I was able to speak with some good friends, like Bob Manual, Tom Hywarren, Chuck Myles and Colin Pick. They were eager to speak to me and share information and documents that they had. They wanted to make it clear that they are very much in favour of this pin, but they wanted to express their stories of what the reality is of these individuals and the recognition and honour they rightfully deserve. Every one of them was pleased to see this motion and the recognition for the many heroes here in the province with the Lieutenant Governor's Military Service Pin. I am glad to be following the example of Saskatchewan, which introduced this motion last year and is recognizing the many men and women in that province.

As we know, the many regiments across this province have had a long and distinguished legacy in fighting for, protecting and preserving the many liberties we enjoy as Canadians. These brave Canadians left their loved ones behind to fight for freedom, democracy and peace—for fundamental Canadian values. The liberties we enjoy as Canadians today were preserved by the bravery of Canadians in Normandy nearly seven decades ago. Their legacy endures as we pay tribute to our men and women in uniform serving in Afghanistan, Haiti, Libya, Sudan and elsewhere around the world and here at home.

When I spoke with my friend Bob Manual, he highlighted that it has only been recently that the federal government has finally recognized the veterans of Vimy Ridge. It is before the Senate to vote to recognize National Peacekeepers' Day. Most other nations already do this. Only now is the government beginning to recognize the true value of our servicemen and servicewomen and the enormous contribution they have made and are making to our country and to the world. My friend Tom Hywarren echoes these same sentiments.

My friend Chuck Myles had a lot to offer, and I want to ensure that his voice is heard in regard to his concerns. While many of these concerns technically fall under Veterans Affairs and federal jurisdiction, I feel that as a province there are many ways in which we can work with our federal and other provincial colleagues to ensure that we address the concerns of our provinces' and country's heroes.

Chuck spoke a lot about the Cold War and Canada's reluctance to officially recognize the contribution of servicemen and women in this effort. Because it was not actually a war, they won't acknowledge the contribution of those who served, were injured or even died between 1945 and 1991. He has repeatedly tried to obtain information and statistics on casualties. He has made requests for information through the freedom of information act and has been turned down each and every time, being informed that there is no data available. He couldn't even find out how many Canadians served in the Cold War, how many Canadians' lives were lost overseas, how many died on Canadian soil. The response was, "Unfortunately, following a thorough and complete search for all records in response to your request, it is determined that no records could be located within the Department of National Defence."

When Canadians left Europe in the 1960s, they left behind Canadians in Germany, France, Belgium, Sardinia, England and Holland: 1,374 Canadians who died in these places during the Cold War. At least 965 Canadian service personnel died in Europe during the Cold War. How many died on the high seas? How many died right here in Canada? No one can say and no one can find out.

Mr. Myles says he believes that Canadians who served during the Cold War years deserve rightful recognition alongside those who died in other wars. We should honour them alongside veterans in World War I, World War II and Korea, and the peacekeepers who served under UN command.

I also spoke with a good friend of mine, Mr. Colin Pick, who has been tirelessly fighting for veterans his entire career. He says:

"Thank you for your interest in Canada's veterans and the challenges they face as a result of massive problems still existing with the ... New Veterans Charter, as follows: In 2006 two chief executives of Veterans Affairs Canada presented an idea to the Conservative government that would save them billions of dollars in cost-cutting measures, but upon the backs of Canada's veterans.

"The ... government grabbed at the idea, had it rushed through Parliament, then the Senate, because on the surface it sounded like a good idea, but underneath the elaborate wordings were hidden agendas that would rob our veterans and their families of fair and just entitlements to benefits for many years to come.

"Even now, some nine years later, there are hundreds of issues" that veterans face with "veterans' death and disability benefits, which are much underpaid as compared" to "payouts by the courts for civil deaths or accidents of equal standing....

"On a similar note, just as the NVC was a disaster for veterans, likewise is the recent WSIB policy changes that" were "allowed into law by the Wynne government on November 1 of this year, and without care or concern for the fact that such harsh and hurtful policy changes were pushing injured and diseased workers into the poorhouse or onto the streets of ... cities."

He goes on about many other concerns that he has been fighting for continuously for veterans' affairs.

When I talk to the veterans of our area, they do want to see this pin. They do recognize the importance of it. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? Elliot Lake has the only cenotaph in Canada that honours the victims of the Cold War.

Again, I want to reiterate the good work of the member from Leeds–Grenville and that New Democrats stand with all Ontarians in recognizing and reflecting on the sacrifice, including the ultimate sacrifice, of Ontarians who have fought in foreign wars. We welcome this honour that would be bestowed upon them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. James J. Bradley: This debate offers us an opportunity to pay tribute to those who have served in various capacities in the Canadian Armed Forces over the years. The member has suggested an appropriate recognition of those in the form of the motion that is before us today.

All of us are deeply grateful to the veterans' organizations within our communities. In St. Catharines, Branch 24, the H.T. Church Branch, of the Royal Canadian Legion is probably the oldest one. We also have Branch 350, which is the Port Dalhousie Branch; the Merriton Branch, which is known as Branch 138; and the Polish Legion, which is Branch 418; along with the Imperial Veterans, who have a branch of their own in our community. All of them strive to provide service, recognition and ongoing communication with those who have served, both in times of war and in times of peacekeeping.

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There's a thought that perhaps those who have served in war—and obviously they're the ones who have faced the most dire circumstances—should be the only ones who are recognized, but we recognize in Canada that many of our troops who have served in the United Nations forces have placed themselves in considerable danger as well. In fact, there have been incidents taking place around the world where harm has come to United Nations troops. So there are those who have been peacekeepers, those who have assisted in one way or another.

The member would know and has said that when there is an international disaster—we have a situation with Ebola in Africa, for instance, at the present time, where members of our Armed Forces have been designated to provide assistance. It is an imposition on family and friends when people are taken away from what might be normal activities, we would expect, to join the Armed Forces, whether they be full-time members of the Armed Forces or those who would be in the reserves. So recognition is appropriate.

All of us, on at least two occasions I can think of, consistently—one is Remembrance Day, where we gather at the various cenotaphs around the nation to pay tribute to those who have made the supreme sacrifice of their lives. But there are many, as well, we think of on those days who have come back battle-scarred. They can

come back with both physical and psychological wounds, which are part of participation in wars.

The wars are not as they are often characterized in the popular media, that being movies and some television shows, where perhaps they are portrayed in a different circumstance than what really happened. Those who have actually served would tell you that it was not a pleasant circumstance at all times. Yes, there was camaraderie. Yes, there was a distinction of serving one's country. But often they served in times of bitter cold or tremendous heat, when they served in the African campaign, for instance, in the Second World War, where there would be tremendous heat that was very oppressive at that time. They were in winter, they were in summer, they were in rainfall, they were in hot sunshine—all of them served our country to protect something that is vital.

We are in a Legislative Assembly here today. The reason we are able to debate and discuss and, yes, disagree from time to time on policies when legislation comes before the House is because there were people out there in the past, on an ongoing basis, who were there to defend this way of life, our democratic system of which we are all justifiably proud, the liberties that we have in this country.

It's always good, I think, to find a way to recognize those who have served. The member has come forward with a resolution which recognizes them appropriately in a very tangible way. It's not that those who have served seek glory or seek this kind of recognition; the gesture by the member for Brockville—Leeds–Grenville, as it is known—is more in recognition of the fact that they have served and that we want to demonstrate a way in which we can once again show our gratitude.

What is heartwarming when we have our parades is the round of applause for veterans, because many of the veterans are quite elderly now. We, the political representatives, are often in these parades. We're not necessarily accorded a round of applause, nor do we seek it. What we are heartened by is when we hear the round of applause that comes when the veterans, many of them quite elderly, some of them infirm, are making their way down the street toward the cenotaph.

And of course, on Decoration Day, as well, in various cemeteries around the province of Ontario and our country, the graves are decorated in recognition of those individuals. The same day is also Canadian Armed Forces Day.

So I want to say to my friend the member for Leeds–Grenville that I think he will find considerable support in principle for this particular resolution, and I commend him for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: It's a distinct pleasure to rise in support of such a poignant motion by my colleague from Leeds–Grenville. This resolution proposes the creation of a Lieutenant Governor's military Service Pin in recognition of all Ontarians who have served or are serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. I think this is a great idea.

It's a modest proposal, but it couldn't be more appropriate.

The Canadian Armed Forces have finished their 13-year mission in Afghanistan, and the world is facing unprecedented threats, unlike anything we have experienced in the modern world.

True, the battlegrounds may be far, far from home, but it is our men and women in uniform who fight on our behalf against determined enemies. Their bravery and courage are to be admired and recognized for all time.

A Lieutenant Governor's military Service Pin that can be worn by veterans in civilian clothing would make it easier to recognize these heroes and easier, then, for us to thank them personally for their service when we encounter them when they are back at home in safety.

We must never forget the 158 Canadian soldiers, one diplomat, one journalist and two civilian contractors who gave their lives in Afghanistan. Fifty-two of the soldiers killed were Ontarians. My riding was not without its sacrifice. Sapper Brian Collier and Warrant Officer Robert Wilson were killed in action in Afghanistan. And we can never forget the thousands and thousands of fallen men and women in World War I, World War II, Korea and other devastating conflicts. This military service pin would remind us that our peace is fragile and we should never take it for granted.

My riding is home to the Queen's York Rangers Regiment, with over 250 years of history. The Rangers have provided service to both the York and Simcoe communities and have made many of us proud in their accomplishments overseas. The Queen's York Rangers cadets provide youth with unique opportunities and the most valuable, up-to-date training available. I'm very proud that the Rangers continue to carry on and strengthen their traditions in York-Simcoe and continue to impact and inspire our youth. I'm pleased to know this new honour will recognize the Queen's York Rangers' historic service as well.

This Lieutenant Governor's pin will not be the first of its kind. It is modelled after one established in 2013 in Saskatchewan, and I think that its success only means that ours is going to be successful as well.

As Canadians and Ontarians, we are privileged not to live in war. There are places in the world that have been embroiled in war for more than a generation. We should remember our soldiers who also support war-torn citizens with humanitarian aid, food, clean water, medicine, and building infrastructure like schools.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage every member of this House to proudly support this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm thrilled to speak on behalf of this motion in order to recognize the sacrifices made by Ontario's veterans who have served with valour and distinction in pursuit of liberty, justice and peace. At a time when Canada's role and influence in the world is expanding, it's important to foster a renewed sense of appreciation for the men and women who risk their lives,

both at home and abroad, in order to defend our nation and the values we all hold so dear.

Additionally, as one of our most major missions in the past century comes to a close, it seems fitting to honour over 40,000 soldiers who have selflessly served our province and our country over the past 14 years in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Issuing a pin to soldiers is a beautiful custom that allows for soldiers to receive the pins at public ceremonies, yet another venue at which to celebrate and appreciate their services to our province and our country. It's a custom that is already in place in various other countries around the world. The example that comes to my mind right now is Israel, where every soldier who fights during a conflict is awarded a pin for their dedication and service at the end of that conflict. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure you wouldn't be surprised to hear that there are a lot of Israelis living in Thornhill, and most of them, if they're adult age, have served in the Israeli army.

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I can still remember being about 12 years old when the phone rang, and I answered it—my maiden name is Gladstone. A gentleman said, "Is Private Gladstone there, Miss?" I felt like saying, "Wrong number" until I realized my older brother had joined the cadets. He very proudly joined. There were a lot of training exercises and a lot of weekend trips and things like that. He at the time was in what's called CEGEP in Quebec, which is sort of our grade 11 and first-year university. They gave him these badges that I had to sew on for him over his pocket that said "Gladstone." I managed to snag one for myself and sewed it on one of my shirts that I wore very proudly. I got a sort of khaki, army-looking camouflage shirt, and I put "Gladstone" on it. It was my favourite thing to wear with my little combat boots.

I think that the character-building and the camaraderie of our military is very well known and very well respected. It behooves all of us to encourage our children to contemplate at least getting involved in the junior level of the cadets or whatever other programs are available.

I just want to mention a little bit more about the pin, which I understand is designed to be worn not only on their army uniform but also on civilian clothing as well. It would give the soldiers the opportunity to be recognized for their service, their achievements, dedication and bravery by the people they serve. It's a shame that, when soldiers are out of uniform, people don't recognize them and treat them to a coffee at Tim Hortons like so often is done.

I strongly recommend this movement to recognize soldiers outside of their army bases. I know that when I see somebody in a military uniform, and when I see somebody now wearing the pin that I think hopefully will get delivered to our veterans soon, I would go the extra mile to pay my respects to any soldier who has, in some cases, gone 5,000 miles to protect me, my family and, very importantly, my values. Honouring a soldier can be done in many ways. A pin is a small token to show how appreciative we are of their efforts.

I hope to see this motion passed quickly. I want to thank the member for bringing it forward. I want to thank everybody for the comments.

I especially want to mention that, on our side of the House, in the official opposition, it was three women who spoke on this military topic. We now have a Lieutenant Governor who is a female, and we also have the first secrétaire générale de l'Organisation internationale de la francophonie who is the first woman serving in that capacity. As a female, maybe I look for those opportunities to mention it, but here's another opportunity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now recognize the member for Leeds–Grenville. You have two minutes for response.

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank the members for Timmins–James Bay, Mississauga–Streetsville, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Algoma–Manitoulin, the Chair of Cabinet and minister without portfolio, and the members from York–Simcoe and Thornhill.

I mentioned earlier, Speaker, that it's with great pride that I'm standing here wearing the tie of my Leeds–Grenville militia unit, the Brockville Rifles. I'm proud to be a friend of the Rifles.

It was a privilege, following this year's Remembrance Day service, for me to attend a ceremony at the Brockville armoury where the Brocks unveiled their Afghanistan Battle Honour. More than 20 Brockville Rifles reservists served with bravery and distinction in Afghanistan. I know I speak for everyone in Leeds–Grenville when I say we could not be more proud to call them our own.

But there was a special person missing from that ceremony on Remembrance Day, and I'm saddened he's not here with us at today's debate. That person is Ben TeKamp, a former mayor of Brockville and honorary colonel of the Brockville Rifles, who passed away on October 12. Earlier this year, I gave a member's statement in tribute of Mr. TeKamp.

I would be remiss in the context of today's debate if I didn't also salute Ben's lifelong commitment to the men and women of Canada's military. I know Ben would have been the first person to congratulate me for this initiative and to encourage everyone to support it, because he recognized the need to honour those who have served at every opportunity.

I just want to take this opportunity to tell one story. In the House, we have our Vimy pin that all members were given. I jumped on a plane, flew to Ottawa. As I was getting off the plane, a young man came up to me and asked me about the Vimy pin, asked me where I got it. I said that as a member of provincial Parliament, we were all given a copy of the Vimy pin here in the Legislature. He said to me, "I asked my CO for one of those, and it's very rare." He couldn't get one. I took the pin off my lapel and I handed it to him, and he asked me, "How much for the pin?" I said, "No, you deserve it more than I do." I would never have known that that man was with the Canadian Armed Forces if he hadn't mentioned his commanding officer.

I ask for everyone's support for this motion. I think it's high time we recognize our veterans here in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on the motion at the end of private members' public business.

TRANSPORTATION OF AGGREGATES

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Transportation should continue to work with the aggregate and excavation industry to consider viable solutions to resolve weight compliance and safety issues regarding commercial shipping; and provide updated definitions of aggregate and excavation materials after comprehensive industry consultations as part of the Ministry of Transportation's ongoing review.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Malhi has moved private members' notice of motion number 17. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

The member for Brampton–Springdale.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: It is a pleasure to debate this resolution this afternoon, and I am pleased we were able to fit this into the legislative schedule before the House rises for the holiday break.

I'd like to present the resolution one more time: that in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Transportation should continue to work with the aggregate and excavation industry to consider viable solutions to resolve weight compliance and safety issues regarding commercial shipping; and provide updated definitions of aggregate and excavation materials after comprehensive industry consultations as part of the Ministry of Transportation's ongoing review.

I've had the opportunity and the pleasure to meet with the dump truck industry representatives and I would like to take this opportunity to introduce some of those representatives as guests who have joined us today to watch this debate. I know some of them are here today while others could not make it due to the weather, so I'm going to go with my original list. First and foremost, Babneet Punia, who is a director with the association; Sukhpal Jeet Kang, who is the vice-president; Baljeet Grewal, the president; Anandpal Singh, the safety director; Jarnail Mand, director; Kirpal Grewal, member; Jasbir Singh Chahal, director; Jaspal Singh Deol, director; Inderjit Singh Goosal, general secretary; Hardeep Hayer, director; and Darshan Banit, general secretary. Thank you for coming out and joining us today.

These dump truck operators provide a lot of business, employment and economic activity in my riding of Brampton–Springdale and across the province. They are an important part of Ontario's economy. I agree with their mission statement, which is to promote the importance of their industry as well as to support their businesses in a safe, professional and sustainable fashion. That is exactly what this debate is meant to champion: a safe, professional and sustainable industry in our province.

First, let me begin by saying that I know that the Ministry of Transportation continues to work closely with the

aggregate excavation industry in Ontario and is currently undergoing a review of the issues we are discussing this afternoon. They are working productively together to develop viable solutions to resolve weight compliance and safety issues.

I've been working with the minister and the Ministry of Transportation and I am pleased that the ministry is always open to listening to our partners' concerns and working co-operatively with them on solutions. I know that as a ministry, MTO's first concern is the safety of those using our highways, and I think they do a great job at providing a safe transportation system here in Ontario. This is all to say that the laws we have in place, including vehicle weight restrictions, are designed to ensure that our roads are safe.

1450

I'd like to use a part of my time to give a brief overview of the issue of weight compliance. Overweight loads on dump trucks are a major concern. That's because aggregate haulers are expected to comply with allowable gross weight requirements. What are these requirements? They are that charges will be laid if the amount of a gross weight overload exceeds 2,000 kilograms.

As previously mentioned, the aggregate and excavation industry and the Ministry of Transportation continue to work to develop viable solutions to resolve weight compliance issues.

Currently, the MTO has temporarily suspended axle weight enforcement. This policy applies to aggregate haulers and includes any "vehicle combination that is designed for dumping or spreading sand, gravel, crushed or uncut rock, asphalt, slag or rubble or any mixture of such materials"—basically, those operators engaged in the aggregate industry. It's my understanding that all of the above are covered under an exemption from December 2013 through to March 31, 2015.

Beginning March 6, 2013, no enforcement action for weight violations was to be taken by MTO enforcement officers. Further details include that operators will be required to remove a portion of the load only when the amount of the overload exceeds the allowable gross weight by more than 3,000 kilograms for vehicles or combinations with five axles or less, and 5,000 kilograms for vehicles or combinations with six axles or more. The amount of the overload must then be corrected to within 2,000 kilograms of the allowable gross weight.

Deferred enforcement of load equalization requirements for safe, productive, infrastructure-friendly vehicles within section 14 of Ontario regulation 413/05 will continue. There will be no weight reductions imposed for improper load equalization.

I understand that the suspension of axle weight enforcement is a temporary measure while we all work to develop long-term solutions.

In addition to all of this information, I believe we need to further clarify the definitions of "aggregates" and "excavation materials." It seems as though the main distinction is that aggregates are defined as "sand, gravel,

crushed or uncut rock, asphalt, slag or rubble or any mixture of such materials." But what is the difference between sand versus dirt or soil? Shouldn't this be defined as well? And if it is, what is the difference? What rules should apply?

I also want to speak to the issue of safety. Industry representatives have informed me of a few of the concerns they have been experiencing, and I would like to take a moment to speak about them.

First, it has come to my attention that while the vast majority of gravel sites have scales, I have been told that all sites do not have scales that measure weight prior to leaving the site. This falls under the ongoing review of the MTO.

Second, truck drivers are not able to interfere with staff who load their trucks at gravel pits or excavation sites. As a result, many trucks are loaded with improper axle-weight loading specifications or are in excess of weight restrictions, which result in violations at the MTO scale sites. The concern here is that this may potentially lead to intentionally overloaded trucks. Shippers and loaders on-site load trucks and should be aware of and comply with weight regulations, but it appears as though many are not as vigilant as they should be.

In some circumstances, truck drivers are asked to spread the load in their trucks to ensure axle weight is evenly distributed. This is not their responsibility, yet they are fined if their truck is overweight.

The more one can overload a truck, the less overall number of trucks need to be contracted to complete a job. The result is that drivers are given the ultimatum of taking the load or losing potential future contracts with these companies.

Speaker, the following are some thoughts about potential solutions. First of all, I believe that safety is paramount and should come first. Secondly, perhaps we should look at implementing some more stringent rules that hold sites without scales liable for excess weight or improper axle-weight loading specs on trucks that they have loaded. Perhaps tickets should be issued to the site as well as to companies, not just the drivers.

Also, could the MTO possibly consider using a mobile scale, periodically, outside these sites to weigh trucks before they leave the premises? Random mobile checks may provide increased motivation to make sure the standards are being met, thus decreasing violations.

I believe it may be also a good idea—a concern that was raised—to have diverse multilingual inspectors at the provincial weighing scales.

I also want to speak briefly about the issue of brokers in the dump truck industry and how it affects fairness and safety. To clarify, a broker is a person or company who arranges with an operator to carry the goods of another person or company by commercial motor vehicle for compensation. Essentially, a broker is an entity that is sometimes used to contract the carrier, the dump truck operator.

Representatives of the industry have informed me that there was legislation regarding load brokers, i.e., Ontario regulation 556/92 under the old Truck Transportation

Act. When the TTA was repealed, the requirement for the load broker certificate and surety bond were eliminated. It appears as though the former was more comprehensive than what remains in the Highway Traffic Act today.

These brokerages are not regulated in Ontario. According to research from the legislative library, Quebec is the only Canadian jurisdiction that currently regulates truck brokers. Perhaps it would be appropriate to consider regulating these brokers like Quebec. I know that drivers want regulations for brokers. Why should drivers carry all the risk and receive all of the penalties?

My debate time is almost up. Before I end my presentation, I would once again like to thank our guests for joining us. I would, again, like to focus on what we talked about in terms of safety and the concerns that they face. This has been an ongoing issue and we need to commit to working with the dump truck association and the other stakeholders in the industry to resolve these issues so that we can have safer roads and better regulations for our drivers.

I would like to thank my colleagues for joining me in this afternoon's debate and I look forward to hearing more on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to join the debate on today's resolution. I want to thank Ms. Malhi for bringing this forward.

Mr. Arthur Potts: The member for—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, the member for Brampton—

Ms. Soo Wong: Brampton–Springdale.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Brampton–Springdale? Yes, she took over from Linda Jeffrey in the last Parliament.

Ms. Soo Wong: That's right. Mayor Jeffrey. Your Worship, to you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, she is Her Worship Jeffrey now, yes. I wanted to thank her for bringing this item to the Legislature today. I, like her, encourage the government to enact a solution to this problem that's been going on too long. The right thing is in place today. There is a moratorium on the fines, only because the law, as it exists, is essentially unenforceable because, clearly in the minds of those who made the decision, there was a gross unfairness to it—"gross," no pun intended to the gross vehicle weight ratio that we talk about as truckers.

First, I want to talk a little bit about aggregate in general because I have a lot of time here, and the member for Brampton–Springdale has articulated the problem very well. The question now is, what do we do to arrive at a solution? She's absolutely right: You can't have one segment of the equation bearing all the risk. If you're the guy behind the wheel of that truck who gets the fine, the risk is all on you—I don't mean that in a singular gender way—if you're the person driving that truck. We have lots of female truck drivers today and they're darn good. Some of them are better drivers than me.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Most likely. But it shouldn't be their risk. For the driver, at the end of the day, if they

get hit with a significant fine, that day is lost. And maybe more than a day, because they're not going to be making any money if they're getting fines when it is an unjust situation and all the risk is borne by them. So I want to thank her for bringing this forward to the Legislature.

I want to talk about aggregate in general. I've got a lot of aggregate in my riding as well—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: We can tell.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, yes. The gravelly-voiced doctor over there—no pun intended—tells me I've got a lot of aggregate in my riding.

It is an absolutely essential component of our society today. If we don't have aggregate and we can't mine and extract aggregate, we stop. We've got to take that into consideration as we enact all of these regulations surrounding aggregate and remember that the farther we have to truck that aggregate, the greater effect we have on the environment. We need to think about that when we're failing to licence new pits simply because someone doesn't want that pit licensed near their place of residence or where they like to believe that nature is alone with them. We've got to take that stuff into consideration.

1500

If you don't have aggregate, you've got nothing. You can't build anything. If you can't build anything, your society fails. You can't build a building without aggregate. Even if it's an all-wood building, you've got to get that aggregate in some way. If you haven't got roads, you can't build that building because you can't truck the aggregate there, and if you don't have aggregate, you can't build the roads. It's an essential part of what we do. The aggregate industry sometimes—it's not the sexiest industry: gravel trucks running up and down the road. They don't see that maybe quite as glamorous as the video game business. You see the ads on television and you've got to get the latest video game. Well, if we didn't have aggregate, there would be no place to make those video games because we wouldn't have been able to build the roads or the buildings to house them. Sometimes we've really got to think back and remember just how essential and basic that industry is. If we didn't have an aggregate industry, we wouldn't be here, so I want to thank the member for Brampton–Springdale for bringing this forward.

On the flip side of it—so we're talking about a moratorium that goes until the end of 2015. Correct? Well, the government has to act and act expeditiously, because the situation, as it exists without the moratorium, is not right. You have to have a situation that is fair to all of the players so that the burden isn't being borne by one part of that equation. The emphasis and the onus is on the government to move. I appreciate the member, as a member of the government, bringing a resolution that calls upon her government to actually do something, because lately, as we've been seeing, they don't do very much other than time allocation. Maybe they could bring a bill in for these changes and put it on time allocation and get this taken care of, but they may not see it as being important

enough. The member had to take it upon herself to bring this before the Legislature.

But the issue is there before us. The government will be able to make their own decisions about how they're going to act with respect to this motion. It is the last day of the House before the Christmas break and a bit of a break for the Legislature. We'll return on Family Day. The Ministry of Natural Resources and the transportation ministry will have a chance to look at this. I expect that this resolution is going to carry because I can't see anything in this resolution that would give me any reason to be opposed to it. It's a positive move on the part of the member, and I think it would be a positive move on the part of us, as legislators, to bring this forward. This issue will be, when we return, when you see me next—

Ms. Soo Wong: Yak, yak, yak.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, if I'm lucky enough to come back, Soo, when you see me next, hopefully, the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Natural Resources will have had the time—because they've had enough time already. The reality is that they should have had this taken care of. They've been spinning their wheels, no pun intended. The wheels are spinning; the wheels have seized.

If the ministers want to get together on this and bring forward a solution, I'm sure this Legislature will be prepared to act tout de suite, because we want to have an aggregate industry that is fair to all of the players so that we can continue to build what I believe is the best place to live, work and raise a family, right here in Ontario. In spite of the fact that the government is not doing a very good job, it is still the best place.

I want to wish each and every one of you a merry Christmas and a safe holiday season.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's just not fair, Mr. Speaker, to follow the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. It's actually not fair that I get to follow him. He always enlightens this House with his passion when he speaks on behalf of his constituents and on behalf of Ontarians.

There's not much that—I didn't disagree with what he was bringing forward, that, yes, this is a motion that we're dealing with from the member from—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Brampton–Springdale.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Brampton–Springdale. This could have been a private member's bill. This could have been a piece of regulation that could have come through the government. This could have been dealt with back in 2012, when this was really highlighted. This is something that the Liberal government has had in their possession for a very long time, and they could have acted on it. It's nice to see that the member has taken the initiative and she has listened to the constituents in her area and now is moving forward with this.

But again, it is at the last hour, and once we do come back in February—I agree with the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—the proof will be in the

pudding. We'll see where your priorities are when we resume here in February and how you're going to be bringing this forward. That's going to be very important. Again, we have our friends who are sitting here with us. They are the ones who are being impacted by what this potentially might do for them. We will see what happens when we get back here in February.

I rise today to speak to the Liberal member from Brampton–Springdale's motion regarding weight compliance of commercial aggregate haulage. On behalf of my New Democratic colleagues and as NDP critic for transportation, I am pleased to support the member's motion that finally calls on her Liberal government to work with the aggregate and excavation industry to consider viable solutions that seek to resolve weight compliance and safety issues when it comes to commercial shipping.

This motion reminds me of a similar one last week by the Liberal member from Durham in that this Liberal government is doing a terrible job at regulating the extraction industry. My hope is that with this motion, we're finally able to pay a little bit more than lip service to an issue that has cost the hard-working families of Ontario both money and safety. We can be doing a lot better, especially with issues that this government has known about for over two years and one that we have yet to see any action on.

Mr. Speaker, in August of this year, a local newspaper in Caledon obtained results of a survey completed by this government's Ministry of Transportation for TAPMO, the top aggregate-producing municipalities. It was conducted two years ago. The survey indicated that almost half of the 434 vehicles surveyed within a two-month period exceeded and therefore violated their gross weight allowance. The study noted that, "overloading is a systemic problem which involves shippers, carrier, drivers and" the Ministry of Transportation.

When asked about the report at the time, the ministry claimed that the survey was part of an internal review. In January of last year, the Minister of Transportation, at the time the member from Ottawa West–Nepean, wrote to the city of Kawartha Lakes and acknowledged that there was a systemic problem and pattern of non-compliance for both gross and axle weight. Yet, when the ministry was asked about the issue by the local newspaper, a spokesman told them that there were no proposals for new legislation and that there were no plans for the ministry to work alongside the Ontario Provincial Police to increase enforcement.

A deeper look at the issue before us, and it's easy to note that enforcement only scratches the surface of this issue. For some reason, Mr. Speaker, this government has refused to make more information available to community groups about the study that the ministry conducted, what the purpose of it was and any proposed action that they intend or intended on taking.

On behalf of my New Democratic colleagues, I am glad to see this issue has come up again, though hardly surprised that there has yet to be any due action to solve the issue at hand. It's my hope that in passing this

motion, the member opposite will finally trigger the Ministry of Transportation to take a deeper look at the issues and take the necessary action to consult with communities and industry groups at stake to fix this.

Specifically, the issues at hand beg a series of questions:

(1) Are the aggregate hauling trucks really overweight?

We're joined here today by friends from the Ontario Dump Truck Association, which the member highlighted earlier. I would like to again introduce Kirpal, Anandpal, Baljeet, Jamail, Babneet, Sukhpal and Jaspal joining us here at Queen's Park. Welcome. You are the faces of the individuals who are being affected by the lack of action by this Liberal government.

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They work in the industry each and every day and talk about their loads constantly being overloaded at job sites. When faced with ministry inspections, their trucks are constantly found to be overweight.

(2) Is this a safety issue on Ontario roads or simply one of overweight vehicles causing too much damage to roads and, as a result, causing an infrastructure cost concern?

(3) Or is it both, and if so, what role does the ministry have to play, being the number one user of aggregate in Ontario? If our government is actually the biggest consumer, the biggest customer, why aren't we dealing with this issue more aggressively?

The issue here is not only one of enforcement or compliance. We can set up weight stations all over Ontario and continue to impose hefty fines on trucks that are found to fall above their gross allowable weight, but as the questions above note, that would only solve a portion of this issue.

What we have here seems to be a flawed system, and a motion that I support in principle but would like to see action on immediately.

The ministry and the industry's discrepancies in weighing trucks need to be fixed. Ministry rules stipulate that trucks need to be at or below a gross allowable weight maximum. They are given one whole number. So when aggregate trucks are loaded at pit sites, they're weighed as a whole, and if they meet this ministry standard, they're simply let go. You get on the scale, you get your weight, you're below the target; off you go.

Despite the Ministry of Transportation stipulating this one maximum gross weight, when they themselves set up screening stations to weigh haulage trucks, they weigh each and every axle individually. Both scales are certified; both scales are used; both scales are a different system.

What's found here is, naturally, that loads shift in the process and trucks often have more material either at the front or at the back of their loads. This obviously shifts and throws off the individual axle weight. Once the ministry applies its formula adding up the totals of each individual axle weight, it's found that trucks are largely and disproportionately found to be overweight, facing hefty fines as a result.

The Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association confirms this discrepancy in the methods used by both industry and the ministry, as does the vice-president of James Dick Construction, Mr. Greg Sweetnam. Both are among a list of industry personnel who confirm that the numbers in the ministry's study are grossly disproportionate as a result of the flawed and unfair system.

Mr. Speaker, in the letter that the member from Ottawa West-Nepean wrote, it was promised that this issue would be followed up on by February of last year. A meeting did take place in March. However, the issue is still before us, and we have yet to hear what steps this government is taking to resolve the issue.

Given that it has been on this Liberal government's radar for over two years, I'm glad that this motion is before us today, and I am pleased to stand in this House to speak to it and support it on behalf of my New Democrat colleagues. I would urge the government to take the necessary steps and the timely steps to disclose what the issues are, what steps are being taken to resolve them, and to finally take action on this particular file.

It's in your court. It's your responsibility. I sit where you sit, way back over here. You have to plug in and get into their ears and make sure that this becomes something that will be part of what you want to see and what your constituents want to see going forward when we come back here in February, and make sure that it is a priority for your government. It's a priority for us, it's a priority for the truck drivers here, it's a priority for Ontarians, it's a priority for our economy, and it's a priority for our municipalities. Make it a Liberal priority, and it shall be.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It's an honour to speak on motion 17, a motion encouraging the Ministry of Transportation to consider solutions to resolve weight compliance and safety issues regarding commercial shipping.

First of all, I just want to reiterate what the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said. He said without aggregate we have nothing, and I say without trucking we don't have aggregate, so we have more nothing. I just want to highlight the importance of the trucking industry in terms of the role it plays in our lives, because we often think a lot of the goods we consume lie in warehouses, but in fact most of the goods that we consume are on the road in trucks. So I feel it's very important that we pay attention to this very important industry.

I also want to welcome and thank the members of the dump truck industry for coming to Queen's Park in support of this very important bill.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Sat sri akal.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Sat sri akal. Mr. Speaker, I'm from the riding of Brampton West. A majority of the population in Brampton West was born outside of Canada. Out of this population, a large number of members of this riding are employed in the trucking industry, not just as drivers but in spinoff jobs: in offices and in other jobs relating to the trucking industry. As a matter of fact, my riding is home to new immigrants who are often highly

qualified but have difficulty in connecting and matching their skills with the right job. A lot of them have chosen the trucking industry in behind-the-scenes jobs, such as dispatch. I know of a few people who have used skills such as computer skills that they used in the country of their origin and applied them to the trucking industry to make software, which helps the drivers do their job much more easily.

Mr. Speaker, I was elected in 2003, and trucking has been an issue that I have been dealing with on a very, very regular basis. I can say I've met with every Minister of Transportation with regard to issues affecting the trucking industry in one way or the other. We have made strides, although in small steps, working with the government and industry in resolving some of the issues. I think we all need to continue to keep an eye on the problems that are faced by our residents in the trucking industry.

In particular I want to speak about the aggregate industry, which includes sand, gravel, rock, asphalt, slab and rubble. What's surprising is that soil is not a part of this list. So what happens is, if a trucker is stopped with soil as the load in the back of his truck, he receives a ticket. Some of these tickets are in the thousands of dollars. I've had people actually show me the tickets that they've received for what I believe is no fault of their own, for what I believe is a small technicality that we can fix by working with the Ministry of Transportation and all the other stakeholders.

Talking about speaking with the Ministry of Transportation, I have brought this issue up with our minister, the Honourable Stephen Del Duca. I've written to him, and he has responded to me. I realize that in government things take time. Hopefully this issue, along with the passage of this motion—I firmly believe that this issue will be expedited if all of the members of the House support this motion so that we can give our members in the lobby some relief.

The second major issue that I think needs to be discussed is the axle weight issue, meaning that the weight of the load in the back of the truck should be equally divided amongst all the axles, depending on the number of axles on the truck. This is also an issue that has been brought to my attention many, many times. I can certainly tell you it's not the fault of the truck driver or the trucking industry, because they have no control over how much weight is placed in the cab of their truck. It's the loaders that load the different types of goods into the cab of the truck, and oftentimes—I can tell you, unequivocally, the trucking industry and the truck drivers do not want to carry more weight than they're allowed, but it's out of their hands. It's the companies that hire these drivers, and if they complain, at times they've gotten an ultimatum, "Do you want to keep your job? Do you want to continue working for us? You do as I say," which I think is really unfair.

1520

For this very reason, we must shift some of the responsibility to the loaders, that it's the loader's responsibility. That's the point of origin of the load. It's very

easy for the loader, first of all, to have a scale that measures the actual weight on each of the axles from the point of origin. The best way of resolving this issue is by placing more responsibility to the companies that load these trucks.

Again, I've had many conversations with the different Ministers of Transportation, most recently the Honourable Glen Murray.

As well, technology has improved. The trucking industry isn't what it was 40 years ago. There are machines—and another viable option for the government could be the new technology, possibly making it mandatory for truck drivers or the trucking industry to have these new mechanisms placed on their trucks so they can actually verify and make sure they're within the law.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sharing my time with the member from Beaches. I did have six minutes, and I'm into some of his time.

Again, I want to thank the members of the trucking industry for coming here. I would like to commit to you, on behalf of the government and myself, that this is a very, very important issue, because a majority—well, not a majority, a big majority—of the people that work in my riding rely on trucking as their source of living, and it's a good source of living. I want to make sure that you guys are protected, that safety is respected and that there are no further hindrances to your industry and your jobs. So thank you very much.

And thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm only going to take a brief moment to encourage the member for Brampton–Springdale to use the comments that have been made here in the chamber this afternoon to put pressure on her own government.

I had some experience as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, and the issue almost 15 years ago was gross vehicle weight and axle weights. This industry has been badly served by the government in not establishing something that protects them. They need protection from the fact that, as was just explained, the gravel is put in the back of the truck, the driver has no idea how it's being distributed, and they have no idea of the difference between gross vehicle weight and axle weight. It's more dangerous going around a corner. Bridges are the most dangerous. They also do the most damage. The loaded trucks going around the bridges are going off a bridge and on to a cloverleaf.

I would just want to add these comments to encourage the member that it's past time that the government came up with something that guaranteed the safety of the driver, protected the road and made the responsibility of what's in the truck that of the person loading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you very much, Speaker, for having the opportunity to rise to talk to the bill. I only

wish that my colleague who's up talking to the truck drivers would have actually left me my six minutes so I could talk on the bill like I like to, but unfortunately, that didn't happen.

I think the intent of this motion is good; the question is whether or not it will be listened to. Working together to maintain roads affected by the weight of the truck is good, but allow me to speak on the root cause of this issue here: truck being overweight.

Surveys are telling us that 47% of the vehicles hauling in Ontario are over the maximum weight allowance. Some people working in the industry are telling us that this has more to do with the weighing situation—as far as I understand, weighing one axle at a time—than it does with transporting loads that are too heavy. I'm not entirely sure what the issue is here, as I'm not an expert on this kind of transportation, but I can tell you that no one seems to have reached a consensus on the figures. We may have trucks driving around with loads that are over the weight limit, but we may not. The major problem here is that we don't know. There are no figures that the MTO, the industry and the community groups can agree on. What this means is that there may be trucks on the road way over, but there may not.

We can agree on one thing: The MTO needs to be more transparent on this issue. They need to be open and public about the discussions that we've had on this issue since it was first raised well over a year ago. That tells you how important it is to the government.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It does bring me pleasure today to rise to speak in favour of my colleague's resolution on aggregate weight distribution compliance.

I wish to congratulate the member from Brampton—Springdale for introducing her first resolution to the House. As one of the newest members in the House, a pleasure that I share with her, she has launched a debate which is very complex, not quite as simple as it may be laid out, and we look forward to speedy resolution, because it's something we all agree on. It is an important debate and it deserves a thoughtful resolution.

Now, when she asked me to speak, I told her I was happy to do so because I quite realize this is a very "weighty" problem for the aggregate industry, the dump truck operators and the ministry. I wish to thank the member for so succinctly summarizing the issues at stake, and the other members of the House for putting it in context with respect of the solution or the problems we must address.

This debate does reflect, however, the fact that our government does want to consult and collaborate with all our stakeholders who are impacted by our policies. Although there's criticism that this hasn't happened fast enough, there has been distraction in a minority House in the last couple of years. We have a chance now, with our powers of a majority, to bring resolution, not being

distracted by other things. I want you to know we are committed to do so.

The ministry has been working with both aggregate and the excavation industry to resolve the weight compliance issues. In particular, we are working with a series of industry stakeholders to identify the causes of overloading and to work out a sustainable long-term solution. So in addition to the Ontario dump truck associations who are here today, I know our government has been working with a whole raft of other organizations, including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, who are represented by the city of Kawartha Lakes, and the Indian trucking association, represented by HQ Truckline. Nelson Aggregates have been involved, as have Dufferin Aggregates, Bulk Transfer Systems Inc., the Greater Ottawa Truckers Association, the Canadian Transportation Equipment Association and the United Independent Operators. The Ontario Provincial Police, the Ontario Trucking Association, the Ontario Road Builders' Association and the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association have been involved.

I've done a lot of work in the past with the Ontario Stone, Sand and Gravel Association, working to develop a group known as Aggregate Recycling Ontario, our mandate being to try to use broken concrete from bridges and road construction in new road construction so we're not always bringing new primary aggregate from the moraine but are using a resource that we can find close to projects—material that has been broken up from a road or a bridge. I've had a chance to work with that association and I know they all are feeding into this debate. It's an important debate, and we look forward to a speedy resolution.

I appreciate, as the member talks about, that we do have a moratorium in place: March 31, 2015. I'm very hopeful and pleased to believe that we will be able to find a resolution which will satisfy people before that moratorium comes up.

But at the heart of the issue, we all agree, is public safety. It's important we have a rule on the books for the weight. I don't think we're disagreeing with that weight. How it applies to an axle is obviously an important disagreement. But the safety issue has to be our number one consideration moving forward in this debate.

1530

Now, as our government is investing \$29 billion over the next 10 years to build our province, you can imagine that we will have a lot more aggregate coming from quarries around the province that needs to be trucked by our good friends here. It needs to be done, like I say, in a safe, responsible way that respects all members of every association, so that all parties who are responsible for the loading—there's agreement, moving forward, that there will not be undue reliance on one party to bear the burden for transgressions of the law. We know there is an incentive to overload, because the more you have on a truck—it's a fixed cost to get there—it's cheaper per tonne. We have to balance those competing interests.

I know the government is working hard with all stakeholders, and we appreciate you coming down here

to advocate on behalf of your association. I look forward to a speedy resolution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise to speak for just a couple of minutes on the topic brought forward by the member from Brampton–Springdale. I'm quite impressed with the level of debate this afternoon on this topic in the Legislature. I thank the members of the association for coming down.

I think we've all heard that the issue of—fairness does not exist: The truck drivers are maybe getting fined, but they're not responsible for the person who put the load on the truck.

I know that Kawartha Lakes, which of course is part of my riding, has been mentioned. They have been in the papers and spoken to ministry officials about the problems that exist within the riding. Kawartha Lakes being the third-largest aggregate producer in the province of Ontario, I have a little bit of aggregate going on in my area.

I think that what has been said about getting on with the process is dead on. The Ministry of Natural Resources does need to deal with several things on the Aggregate Resources Act. I think the Ministry of Transportation is involved in our motion today. I sat on the committee to review the Aggregate Resources Act for a year and a half. We brought in 38 recommendations. I know that the Speaker who is in the chair now was with us, on some of that committee, and so was the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. It was October 2013 that we tabled the report.

The Top Aggregate Producing Municipalities of Ontario, TAPMO, was mentioned earlier, but I will mention them again. They did a presentation at the Association of Municipalities of Ontario in August highlighting what we had done on the Aggregate Resources Act. I see the member from Ajax–Pickering over there, nodding his head. He was with us on the review by the committee.

So the government has had a lot of input. They have to make decisions. We want them to act on the Aggregate Resources Act review. A top priority was actually the levies, which need to increase, because the municipalities that produce the aggregates—a lot of the roads that those trucks run over are municipal roads; the breakdown of the roads. The municipalities are losing money because they are the ones responsible for repairing the roads. That was highlighted in both of those reports that I mentioned. Right now, Dewdney Mountain in my riding is a big project, and I know that it's under an OMB review to discuss haul routes.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A lot has been said and could be said on this topic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now recognize the member from Brampton–Springdale. You have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I would like to take a minute to recognize all of my colleagues who spoke on this motion today: the member from Renfrew–Nipissing, the member

from York–Simcoe, the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, as well as the member from Algoma–Manitoulin, the member from Niagara Falls, the member from Brampton West and the member from Beaches–East York. Thank you all for your valuable input. Thank you for taking the time to speak on this resolution.

I look forward to working with the ministry, as we have been, and moving forward on this issue. It's an issue that is important to all of us and, of course, to our constituents. It has been an ongoing issue. The ministry is committed to moving forward. I have been in conversations with the minister. In the near future, we do plan on meeting with the dump truck association as well as all of the stakeholders in this industry to come up with a viable and long-term solution for the issues they are facing.

There were a number of things that were brought up during the remarks I heard today from all of my colleagues, and I want to reassure my colleagues that we are committed to connecting with all stakeholders. We are committed to consulting with all of our stakeholders so that we have a solution that works for everybody. I want to commit to the dump truck association and everybody who is here today, and our guests, that I'm committed to advocating for you and continuing to advocate for you to our ministry. As with my colleagues from Brampton West and Beaches–East York, we do understand the issues. We did have an opportunity to meet with you earlier this year. We did make commitments. We are committed to carrying forward and advocating on those commitments.

Thank you so much for coming out in the snowstorm. I really do appreciate you coming out and showing your support for my motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SCHOOL BUS CAMERA SYSTEM), 2014 LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SYSTÈME PHOTOGRAPHIQUE RELIÉ AUX AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES)

Mr. Nicholls moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act /
Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant le Code de la route.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Nicholls has moved second reading of Bill 50, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Nicholls.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's with great pleasure that I rise today to deliver remarks for my private member's bill, Bill 50, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act (School Bus Camera System), 2014.

Before getting into the details of the bill, I'd just like to describe how this bill came to be. I was at an event in my riding a couple of months ago when a concerned bus driver came up to me and told me about a shocking number of vehicles that, what we call, "blow by" stopped school buses as they pick up children with their stop signs deployed and red lights flashing. It's an issue that I wasn't totally familiar with, but I was hooked the moment the bus driver shared the story with me.

After the issue was brought to my attention, my office arranged a meeting with local school bus operators so we could gain insights and expertise. They told me that I would not believe the number of drivers that pass buses with their stoplights flashing on a daily basis. It was clear to them that we had a serious problem on our hands. At that point, it was very clear to me that, yes, we did and still do have a very serious problem on our hands.

It's currently against the law to pass buses with deployed stop signs and stop arms, yet the majority of cases go unreported as bus drivers are unrealistically expected to grab a vehicle description as cars blow by.

Earlier this year, the Independent School Bus Operators Association launched the I Stop You Stop campaign, which was their attempt to benchmark province-wide stop arm violations. They received reports from 21 transportation consortia throughout the province, and their findings were truly shocking. In only five days, from May 5 to 9, a total of 754 incidents were in fact reported.

Bus operators and police shared with me that convictions rarely occur even when a school bus driver can get a vehicle description. Not all police forces have the resources to pursue the matter.

You would be hard pressed to find a group more passionate and more concerned with safety than bus operators and their drivers. I sometimes call those drivers the unsung heroes of the roads, who work hard to protect our children's safety. These drivers bring over 800,000 students to school each morning and drop them off every afternoon throughout the province. It takes a lot of dedication to ensure that this is done safely. Frankly, they don't get enough recognition for all the work that they do. Sadly, it often takes a tragedy for us to pay attention to school bus safety, but these people are devoted to it.

After hearing just how extreme the problem is and seeing the concern and worry that this places on drivers and parents, I knew something had to be done. Initially, I considered making it mandatory for all school buses in Ontario to install stop-arm camera systems; however, after discussing the issue with stakeholder groups, including bus operators and associations, I discovered that this would bring a list of potential problems.

First off, bus operators told me that cameras are not needed on all the buses in the province, as certain routes don't have any on-road student pickup or drop-off. There were also concerns about who would pay for the cameras and the camera systems. I asked them, then, "What can I do to help?" In other words, it was the old, "Help me help you. Is there anything at all that the province could do to help, even if it's just a minor change?"

1540

They all agreed that amending the Highway Traffic Act to allow images obtained from stop-arm cameras of motorists illegally passing school buses stopped with their red-light warning lights flashing was a great start.

This is why my bill is limited in scope. It doesn't seek to sort out who has to install the stop-arm cameras; that's a decision best made by municipalities and bus operators. My bill also avoids spelling out who should be responsible for the purchase of these cameras or their maintenance. These decisions are best left to the Ministry of Transportation, in full consultation with expert stakeholders.

However, what this bill does seek to do is to ensure that communities that have begun pilot projects for stop-arm cameras on school buses, and other communities that will follow, won't face any roadblocks when they attempt to use the evidence that they have gathered in court. This is something that is already occurring in many jurisdictions throughout the United States, as well as Canada. Numerous states have already passed laws allowing the use of cameras on school buses to capture video images of motorists illegally passing and endangering children, and some have even made them mandatory statewide.

Here in Canada, PEI passed specific legislation. Pilot programs have begun to spread throughout the country. Manitoba currently has a number of school boards using cameras, and a northern Albertan school board recently launched their own pilot project last year. Closer to home, Ottawa initiated their pilot project earlier this spring. Toronto has since followed suit and is in the early stages of their own test program.

It's clear to me that the use of stop-arm camera systems is increasing as communities look for ways to reduce the number of dangerous blow-bys that happen on a daily basis. This bill is based on a section of the Highway Traffic Act dealing with red-light cameras. If you're caught running a red light, that image can be used in court. It's all laid out in the act.

This bill, if passed, would mean that a photograph of a vehicle obtained from a school bus camera system may be received as evidence in a proceeding under the Provincial Offences Act. This was asked for directly by the people who were involved in the initial stop-arm camera system pilot projects here in the province.

Police have run into roadblocks when trying to take offending drivers to court because there aren't any clear rules on the books for these new systems. We need to take a proactive approach when it comes to this issue. These systems will continue to be installed on more buses, and the Highway Traffic Act must be updated to reflect this trend.

School bus drivers that I've met with have all been incredibly supportive of the bill. They know all too well the danger and the potential for tragedy that occurs every day. Police officers with whom I've spoken about this program agree that clarifying the Highway Traffic Act and putting in rules regarding stop-arm cameras is a good way to assist their efforts to catch drivers that illegally pass stopped school buses.

Just yesterday, I received a letter of support from the Ontario School Bus Association. I'd like to read just a portion of that letter:

"The Ontario School Bus Association (OSBA) supports Bill 50, which proposes the use of cameras on school buses to capture video images of motorists illegally passing school buses stopped with their red warning lights flashing. The video images can be used by police as evidence to prosecute owners of offending vehicles rather than the driver. These cameras, commonly referred to as stop-arm cameras, have proven effective in other jurisdictions across North America by increasing the prosecution rate and raising awareness of the consequences of breaking the law."

Any school bus driver will tell you that illegal passing is a regular occurrence on Ontario's roads. Motorists who are either distracted, not paying attention, in a hurry or unaware of the law illegally pass school buses that are stopped with their red warning lights flashing. The consequences of this behaviour can be the injury or even the death of a child getting on or off a school bus. Stop-arm cameras would augment the on-road enforcement efforts by police in areas of the province where illegal passing of school buses is a problem.

In addition, the Independent School Bus Operators Association has been a tremendous help. They also share a strong focus on promoting the safety of our children. I'm incredibly thankful for their expertise and their support.

Lastly, I've also heard words of encouragement, not only from members of my party who have been supportive every step along the way, but also from members on the government side. I hope that they will lend their support to this bill and help protect the schoolchildren of this province.

I'm also thankful to promote this issue right here in the Legislature. Drivers, police officers, councillors and bus operators have all said that at the end of the day, awareness is the key to getting drivers to think twice and stop when school buses are picking up children. With that in mind, we've already succeeded as we stand here today and discuss the problem.

I think that we can all agree that the safety of our children is our number one priority. Every day, hundreds of children are needlessly put at risk as drivers speed by stopped school buses. Catching the drivers who endanger our children is critical. It would lead to greater awareness of the severity of the issue.

Stop-arm camera systems are starting to be more widely accepted and adopted by bus operators in communities across the province. This bill will allow them to continue their good work, knowing that legislation will help them, not hinder them.

This bill will also make it easier for school bus drivers to do their jobs. It's unrealistic to expect drivers to simultaneously operate a school bus, look after the children who are getting on or off the bus and also grab the licence plate number and vehicle description of a car that blows by their stop sign. It's why so many offenders are never caught.

Today I would hope that, right here in the Legislature, all three parties will join together and support this bill. We need to do the right thing. Let's make life a little bit easier for school bus drivers, who have got enough on their plate as it is. Most importantly, let's work together to protect our children.

I know that my time is close to an end. But we do know, as I mentioned earlier, that these school bus drivers are unsung heroes in many cases, simply because they look out for and guard and protect the safety of our children. We need to make their job easier. With their help, with this bill passed and the proper legislation in place, I know we can make it work and we can help protect our children.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always an honour to stand in this House on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitowlin and also as the New Democratic Party's critic on transportation. I want to commend the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex for putting this bill forward, and I'm pleased to express support from our party for his Bill 50, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. It's a bill that is going to be well received by my caucus and my colleagues.

In doing so, I would urge my fellow members in the House to take advantage of this particular opportunity to strengthen school bus safety across the province, a point I will make in a little bit. I will come back to it later—

M. Shafiq Qaadri: Grappe industrielle, s'il vous plaît.

M. Michael Mantha: Ne fais pas ça.

The proposed legislation at hand would allow any photograph obtained from a school bus camera system to be used as evidence against drivers who violate subsections 175(11) and (12) of the Highway Traffic Act. As we all know, this section makes it illegal to pass a school bus from either the front or back when the bus has the red signal lights flashing. The penalty for doing so is upward of \$2,000 on the first offence, upward to \$4,000 for repeat offenders and up to six months of prison time. Up until now, photographs on board any school buses could not be used as evidence, and this bill would change that.

I would like remind my colleagues that this is an extremely important issue and that we cannot take it lightly. It's worthy of our attention as it affects the approximately 800,000 young children who travel on over 18,000 school buses, covering almost two million kilometres each and every day here in our province.

1550

Studies have shown that when a fatality involving a school bus does occur, it's most likely to happen when students are getting on and off the bus. I am confident that the use of the camera evidence would certainly deter drivers from breaking the law and encourage them to immediately stop upon seeing a school bus's flashing red light.

Unfortunately, despite the hefty penalties, studies have shown that drivers often put the safety of young children at risk across Ontario by ignoring school bus stop lights and passing buses that have their stop lights on anyway.

In a recent study by the Independent School Bus Operators Association, with data from school bus operators in Bruce-Grey, Huron, Perth, Thunder Bay, London, Toronto, eastern Ontario, Waterloo, Sudbury, Renfrew county and York, a total of 754 incidents had taken place over a five-day period whereby drivers refused to stop despite a school bus having its lights on. This is an average of 151 incidents a day, where drivers in each of these areas put the safety of children getting on and off of school buses at risk. I'm certain we all agree that this is 151 incidents too many.

To my surprise, our province is one of two in the country that does not mandate that school buses, like traffic lights, first issue a yellow warning signal cautioning oncoming drivers to proceed with care and slow down before flashing their red lights to stop, despite advocacy from expert groups in the field pushing for this for many, many years.

Research indicates that any school bus manufactured after 2005 would certainly have the wiring capabilities to easily make the switch. This is something that experts in the field of bus safety have strongly advocated for for a very long time. Indeed, allowing school bus cameras to be used as evidence by a third party serves as a deterrent to drivers, though, despite being a good idea that I strongly support, I do caution that it is a reactionary measure that would help solve these cases only after a tragedy has already occurred.

By following the footsteps of legislation in other provinces across the country, as well as that in almost all US states, we can bring our safety measures up to speed and take this issue one step further instead of simply implementing the sort of reactionary legislation.

I'd like to take this time to remind my colleagues of the tragic case of five-year-old Adam Ranger, who, on February 11, 14 years ago, was struck and killed by the driver of a one-tonne truck while being dropped off from his school bus in the town of Mattawa, Ontario.

Adam's older brother Alex Ranger, then 12, had to witness the horror of the incident and has since fuelled the gut-wrenching memory into raising awareness about his brother's senseless death. He does so by advocating for school bus safety and has long since advocated for the use of school bus cameras to be installed on all school buses.

Bill 50 is an effective piece of legislation that certainly could prevent tragedies like that of Adam Ranger by serving as an effective deterrent to drivers. My colleagues and I certainly believe in the effectiveness of allowing school bus cameras to be used as evidence of those who break the rules.

However, I would add to this by also urging members of this Legislature to go one step further, and let's implement the amber warning light system on school buses, bringing us up to speed with the legislation across this country. It is only through preventive measures that we can ensure the safety of school children who ride on school buses across this province.

I want to end there with my short comments. I want to share some of my remarks—or the opportunity for some

of my colleagues to share their own remarks in regard to this bill.

But I do want to commend the member for bringing this forward. It is a good initiative. Let's take this good initiative and look at how we can actually enhance it and make it that much better so that we can get it through the legislative process, get the support of all the members in this House and we can move this forward.

Again, thank you for the time to speak on this, Mr. Speaker. I commend the member for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to join the conversation on Bill 50, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act, that was brought forward by the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex.

I would beg your indulgence for just a moment. I notice that I've got two of my Kitchener Centre constituency office workers here: Carolyn Longman and Allison Remillard. They're here for training. Hello, ladies, and thanks for making it in.

I'm new to the House, and it's very encouraging to see members of different parties working together on an issue that really does make sense and looks at ways to keep our children safer on the road, so thank you very much for spearheading this very important initiative. I am the mother of three children. They're all in their twenties now, but I can tell you that when they were younger, and on and off school buses during their elementary years and high school years, as a parent, I did worry about their safety.

Now, in other jurisdictions around the world where kids ride school buses, we've seen some different initiatives, everything from seatbelts on buses—in the States, in particular, there are many school districts that already have adopted on-board video cameras, although there I understand they're also used as a tool for cracking down on bullying and crime.

I can tell you that here in Ontario, about 800,000 students ride school buses every day on 18,000 school vehicles. Safety on Ontario roads for everyone is one of the highest priorities for our government. Research that has been carried out by Transport Canada informs us that taking a ride on a school bus is 16 times safer than travelling in a family car, so we are very proud of our record of having among the safest roads not only in Canada but in all of North America.

But we are committed to doing more to further improving our road safety record, so here's what I can say about our initiatives to date. We have increased funding to transportation services by 40%, to a total of \$880 million, since 2003. We are in close consultation with our road safety partners to better promote school bus safety. What we're doing together is providing important information to educate riders, parents and motorists.

It is important to remember that our current laws do require that all drivers stop for school buses when the buses have their overhead red signal lights flashing. All drivers need to pay close attention, leaving enough space

and staying alert when approaching or passing a school bus, and those who don't stop for school buses should be punished under the law, and every school bus driver in this province must meet strict licensing rules, along with holding a standard driver's licence.

So, again, we very much appreciate the intent of Bill 50, keeping Ontario school kids safe while travelling on school buses, but there are a few areas where I think the bill could be improved. Currently, the way the Highway Traffic Act is written, it allows for the installation or use of school bus cameras, but a witness is also needed in court along with the video evidence. Bill 50, the way that it is being presented to us, introduces a very unusual rule, that just the video could be used in a case, without having a live witness. The problem is this: Can we be assured of the reliability of the video evidence? Can we count on that? Bear in mind that these video cameras and the digital images that they record would be owned, operated and maintained by private companies. I think that we need to be concerned about the possibility of people being prosecuted and we're depending on the evidence collection process as being completely reliable. Can we be assured of that if this is all that we're counting on?

We also need to be very concerned about how this bill is going to mesh with existing privacy laws. Under our Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, Bill 50 could raise some very serious problems in that regard. The business of respecting people's privacy needs to be carefully fleshed out as we talk about and debate Bill 50.

Now, here is another concern: Is it appropriate for a Provincial Offences Act officer to certify evidence from a private company's video camera? We also need to think about the cost to school bus operators. This has been talked about. If we are going to require that all school buses have cameras on board, this should really be costed so we know what it is we're paying for.

We need to hear from school boards and other stakeholders across Ontario on how this is going to affect them and impact their budgets.

And I want to offer this final question that's worth considering: Since our main concern is the safety of children on and around school buses, are there any additional tools that might exist that we could be adopting to increase safety? Perhaps there are some other practices or tools in place that we should consider.

1600

Again to the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex, we appreciate the intent of Bill 50. Keeping Ontario's children safe is absolutely imperative. This is the highest priority for our government. We know there's always more that we can do to keep our roads safer. We recognize there are some areas of the bill in which we need to give careful consideration and review. But overall, this is a very positive initiative, and I want to thank the member for bringing it forward.

The Deputy (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join in supporting my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex on his bill today.

I want to address a couple of things that were raised by the member for Kitchener Centre, the former riding of John Milloy. She has raised a couple of concerns and I'd like to address them.

Yes, under this bill, the evidence should be accepted in a proceeding, should there be a criminal proceeding or a Highway Traffic Act proceeding, with regard to seeking a conviction on someone who has contravened the act. I don't think we would be looking at the evidence of the camera alone, but also the testimony of the school bus driver in that case as well.

We're not talking simply about the evidence presented by a piece of photographic equipment owned by a private individual or company. We're also talking about eyewitness evidence which—the problem today is, as my colleague indicated, it's very difficult to have all that evidence and then, based on, “Well, I think it was a Ford Fairlane from 1965,” or whatever, and we have licence number this, this, that and that—if we have that video evidence, if we have that picture, if we have that photograph in conjunction with the person's visual memory, I think we have a lot more evidence.

I'm going to support this bill, because I think anything we can do to make our children safer—and I respect the comments from the member from Kitchener Centre as well about how safe our school buses are—because they are. But it's not just because of the laws we've enacted, but it is because of those unsung heroes who operate those buses and take a tremendous amount of care in ensuring that our children—not my children anymore; they're done with their busing days, but we've got grandchildren now who are using the school bus. I myself never went to school on a school bus, not in all my life. Some people would say, “You probably never went to school,” but that's a debatable point. But our grandchildren today, of course, do go on school buses, and a lot more kids today go on school buses. I had to walk over a mile. I was in grade 1. I walked over a mile, or a mile and a half, to go to school. That didn't bother me—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: In the snow too.

Mr. John Yakabuski: But in snow—uphill both ways.

Anything that we can do to prevent injuries or fatalities to our children, I'm going to be in support of that. This bill will certainly go a long way in order to do that. The best, the greatest natural resource we have in this country, or any other is our children, so we're going to do whatever we can to protect them.

I know the member from Kitchener Centre has raised some legitimate concerns, and I respect her for that, but I hope she will still support the bill, because this is a very important piece of legislation, and I want to thank my colleague for bringing it forward.

Having this will serve as a significant deterrent, because the people out there will know that in addition to the testimony, the recollection of the driver and possibly even some of the older students on the bus, they will now have a tangible piece of evidence, a photographic piece of evidence that says, “Yes, that car was there.” That is going to be hugely important.

If we were able to have photo radar—we've got cameras on the 407. We're talking about cameras in police cruisers and all of those kinds of things. A picture is a picture. We've got to not muddy the waters by saying what came from a school bus operator. We've got to empower them to say, "We have this trust in you that we're going to place an additional burden on you. In addition to all the burdens you already have, we're going to place on you the burden of compiling evidence if someone breaks the law and goes by that school bus when those red lights are flashing."

This will serve, I believe, as a significant deterrent to all those people who think that because a conviction under the current circumstances is difficult to achieve—they'll think twice. They'll be much more careful, and our school buses, which are among the safest in the world, will be safer yet.

I thank my colleague from Chatham–Kent–Essex. I'm going to take a chair now and pass the debate on to others as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Windsor West.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oshawa.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Oshawa. I have trouble with that seat; it's so far away. Sorry about that.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Yes, well, it's okay. I am very pleased to be able to stand in this House, regardless of where I'm from, but I am pleased to be specifically from Oshawa. So thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity.

I'm pleased to speak to Bill 50, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. Thank you to the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex for bringing this forward and for speaking to it. I'd like to make similar points that we've heard from the members from Kitchener Centre and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and, of course, my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin.

As I've said many times before, I'm coming to this Legislature by way of the school system, so I have a number of personal connections. I have spent much time on a school bus. I have fond memories of class trips and I have not-so-fond memories of being a student on a bus. There are lots of opportunity for life to happen on a school bus, and I spent much of that time maybe facing the wrong direction, chatting with friends around seats, over seats and whatnot. Then, as a teacher, I spent much of the time on school buses redirecting our students to keep them safe and moving forward and facing the right direction, working to keep them safe.

Certainly my fond memories of being a teacher on a bus were that, oftentimes when I was on that bus, we were headed somewhere special. We were off to a class trip; we were off to learn together, which is a great opportunity. You want to be able to get where you're going. You certainly want all of those students to make it to their destination safely. At the end of the day, when you send them home, you want to know that they're all safe and going to make it to their caregivers.

I'm looking forward to sharing many of the ways that we do ensure student safety, but I'm pleased to address this bill because the goal in this bill is to catch those drivers who fail to stop and who fail to prioritize the safety of our children and the safety of our students.

A little bit about our school system and prioritizing safety and the well-being of our students: Many of you might remember having fire drills in schools. We have those, and we have lockdown drills now. I spent some time in the States and we had earthquake drills. But we also have bus-safety drills. The bus parks out front, and class by class we take our students out and we make sure that they know not just the rules of how to behave or how to conduct themselves on the bus, but that they understand a bit about bus design, that they are a safe vehicle. They understand why it's important not to distract the driver or each other. They talk about what that danger zone or that safe buffer zone actually is around the bus, what 10 big steps looks like in front of the bus before they cross, to stay safe.

Our students know how to be safe while waiting for the bus, they know how to be safe on the bus, they know how to be safe when they get off of the bus, and they also know how to hop out of the back door, in case of an emergency, safely.

We make sure that our students and our teachers are safe. We have assemblies where we go through the same thing, year after year after year. We reinforce this with our students; we reinforce it the parents.

This bill, Bill 50, is an important step to make sure that those in our greater community, who are posing the most risk to our students, who know the rules and know how to be safe—to ensure that we can catch them, that we can find them and we can hold them accountable.

The idea of camera placement is an important piece to that. There is a part in this bill that says, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations ... prescribing what constitutes a school bus camera system." It will be interesting to see if some of the ideas involve a camera that not just focuses on the outside and on the drivers but also maybe captures what happens in the bus as well.

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I think that's a part of the conversation to be had as well when we're talking about potential bullying or the safety of the driver. That's a conversation that will be interesting to have.

We're seeing pilot projects in Sudbury and North Bay and getting feedback from those communities. They are trying these cameras in areas where there have been complaints. There is a very real need here. In addition to the cameras being used and allowing the photographs to be used as evidence in proceedings, I think the education piece in the greater community is so important. Rather than just educating the students in our schools, we need to be focusing on educating the greater community as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you, and my apologies for the wrong riding.

Further debate?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about Bill 50, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. I want to talk not just about the member's proposed legislation; his predecessor, Pat Hoy, had been a strong advocate of children, bus safety and what have you. I want to remind the members here in the House that his predecessor from Chatham-Kent-Essex, Pat Hoy, also brought forth several bus safety regulations and bills. I want to remind the members here that his proposal in 2004, An Act to enhance the safety of children and youth on Ontario's roads, would eventually become adopted by then-minister Harinder Takhar. So, the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex has some history there.

I'm very pleased to hear my colleague from Kitchener Centre raise some very valid points with respect to this particular bill, and I think that everybody in this House supports the intent of this bill, that the government is committed to ensuring road safety, especially for our youngest citizens. Which member do you know in this House who won't support young people? There's nobody, okay? The fact here is that we do have very safe school buses.

I also want to put on record, Mr. Speaker, that some of the major violators and challenges with regard to school bus safety occur in suburban areas. The conversation we need to have is: What's going on with those suburbs? Are they in so much of a hurry at the risk of the safety of our students and the children in school buses? That has to be addressed.

I think my colleagues from Oshawa as well as Kitchener Centre raised a point about the school board. As a former school board trustee—this issue, if passed, will be a cost to school boards across Ontario. If this is a mandatory requirement, somebody is going to pay for it, not just the independent operators of the school buses. That conversation needs to be had so that we make sure. I know that on the Toronto District School Board, we spend millions of dollars to transport students across the city just on school buses. This conversation needs to involve the school boards, but also the operators, because at the end of the day, who is going to be greatly affected by this proposed legislation? Yes, safety is our first priority, but then there are also costs attached to it.

The other piece of the legislation I want to speak about is the fact that right now school bus operators can already install the cameras. The question that is being asked here is that we need legislation so that this can be used as evidence in the courts. I hear the comments made by the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex with respect to the city of Ottawa looking to us to deal with this particular issue.

I am also aware, Mr. Speaker, that other provinces—Prince Edward Island began a pilot project in 2011, and then it became province-wide legislation; I believe that Alberta launched having cameras on school buses last year; and Manitoba. I also believe that we need to look at data from these other jurisdictions: How it has improved safety; and also when they present it to the courts. Very clearly, PEI, which started back in 2011, has some

history, but they also have some evidence and some data that we can learn from, because this is not a new type of tool to improve safety for our children in a school bus. There are other jurisdictions that have used these particular devices, and the question needs to be asked: What are the data? What can we share? What can we learn?

The other piece here—I know the Minister of Transportation is very, very keen on ensuring every road in Ontario is safe. The recent passage of a bill, the proposed bill dealing with distracted drivers, is a very classic example. You, Mr. Speaker, know about this issue about distracted drivers: One of your residents was killed recently by a distracted driver.

So at the end of the day, with respect to the whole proposed legislation, I think there are many of us in this House who would be supportive of the bill, to the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex, but I think there need to be more conversations with the various partners, because this bill alone is not just about the Ministry of Transportation. This bill also greatly affects the Ministry of Education and others who are being affected every day as an operator for school buses.

Last but not least, I want to thank the member for bringing this particular bill to the House because this is probably his first bill in this session. But also, you have passion about this particular issue because you heard from your constituents and you brought it back to us, and that's the right thing to do. I want to say thank you, and I also want to congratulate you for bringing forth this particular issue to ensure that every student in the province of Ontario is safe when they are in and out of the school buses.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just want to begin by saying how pleased I am to be able to respond to the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex and his initiative around school bus cameras.

I had intended that I would begin my speech by offering to introduce constituents of mine who had come to hear today's debate, but I think everyone would agree that to have an undisclosed length of a trip to Toronto today for a potential 20 minutes of debate is unrealistic. So when they called this morning and said, "Thank you for the invitation; we'd love to be there," we certainly understood why they wouldn't. But it was Jim Switzer and Vicki Manning from Switzer-Carty Transportation. Since I'm sure they didn't have the buses out for the kids, they weren't going to then try to get down here.

I think one of the things that—when we're looking at this information and suggestion that this member has brought forward, we need to put it in the context of how many thousands of people are in a school bus every day. Every day, thousands of students across Ontario rely on school bus transportation to get them safely to and from school.

Parents trust that the buses are safe, and I think that that isn't in question. I know the school bus industry and

the drivers make student safety their priority, and they do that good work every day. However, it is the drivers, the out-of-control drivers, that the buses meet on their trip. Kids' safety is put in jeopardy when a car does not stop for a school bus even when the arm is down and kids might be crossing the street.

It's horrifying to think that all the efforts of, first of all, stopping, then the flashing lights, then the cautionary flashing lights, then the arm—over the years, all these things have been introduced as methods of ensuring student safety, and it's hard to believe that we still have a problem. In fact, the Independent School Bus Operators Association counted a total of 754 incidents of drivers passing school buses when they should have stopped. How long a period? Five days. In five days, 754 incidents had taken place.

Even though it's illegal, it is difficult to enforce. This option that we're looking at today is a method of increasing the opportunity to enforce what is already against the law.

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As other members have mentioned, there are pilot projects going on, because the key is whether or not the information that the camera picks up will be deemed appropriate in a court of law. There's no point in having it if it doesn't stand that test. We would hope that with these pilot projects, it will become clear that the courts do need to accept this kind of tool that would help us.

We can't stop in our effort to deter people from passing a school bus, because we have to find a way to make children safe when they get on and off a school bus.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm happy to rise to support a bill that highlights and promotes safety for our children. The Highway Traffic Act states that drivers must come to a stop when a school bus flashes its lights and extends the side arm on the side of the vehicle, but unfortunately, we know that many drivers do not.

The suggestion to put cameras in, I think, is a very good suggestion because we know that all too often people don't do the right thing unless they think somebody is watching. They know it's hard for a school bus driver to try to catch their licence plate. I think that people will think twice about driving by a school bus. We're left to wonder why people do it. Obviously, many people know that they're doing something wrong and they just go ahead. Possibly, some people are distracted and just not really remembering what the rules of the road are. Maybe we have to have some kind of public awareness campaign.

We have so much great technology now and signage that I wonder if we could have an electronic sign on the back of the bus reminding people of the rules of how far they have to stay back—maybe not in terms of metres, but maybe in terms of how many car lengths they need to stay back—because I see cars stop, but they're stopping far too close to the actual school bus.

I wonder if we need more adults inside the school buses sometimes. Like many people here, I have spent some time on school buses—not so much as a child; more as an adult going on field trips, even to visit the Legislative Assembly here sometimes. I'm not sure which age is more difficult to have on your school bus. I think that people who have ridden on school buses with kids are in awe of how the driver is able to watch what's going on on the road and is still able to focus with so many kids on the bus. Oftentimes, the kids are having disagreements with each other and things like that.

I'm reminded of one of my neighbours. The babysitter called the mother at work because her daughter didn't come home from kindergarten on the bus. Immediately, they called the bus company and they went out in the yard, into that bus. There was nobody on the bus except for one little girl, four or five years old, asleep in her seat.

It does make us wonder what we can do, as legislators, to make the buses as safe as they can be to ensure that cars aren't driving by the buses—it's called "blow bys," which is a new term for me to learn—and also to make sure that the kids are safe on the bus.

I think that we should take advantage of cameras—they're so much less expensive than they used to be—and we should take advantage of everything at our disposal, including, maybe, LED flashing signs on the buses. Maybe just the flashing lights aren't enough.

I really hope that we can come back to work after the Legislature breaks and get working on many of these very worthwhile bills that have been presented.

I just want to wish everybody a merry Christmas, a happy Hanukkah, a happy new year, and just in general, happy holidays, and a safe drive home or flight, depending on how you're getting home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have 21 seconds left on the clock, and I want to be the last speaker on the last day of the last session.

More importantly, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, this is an important bill. We'll do what we can to support it. We want to keep rural children safe.

I would like to wish you all a merry Christmas and happy new year.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I now recognize the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex. You have two minutes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: First of all, I sincerely want to thank the members from Algoma-Manitoulin, Kitchener Centre, Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, Oshawa, Scarborough-Agincourt, York-Simcoe and Thornhill for their insightful remarks.

You know, it was Neil—I almost said Neil Diamond, but it wasn't. It was Neil Armstrong who said, one small step for man, one giant step for mankind. I look at this bill and I truly think that this is a big step moving us in the right direction.

All this bill does is allow evidence captured by a camera, capturing the licence plate on a vehicle, to be allowed as evidence in a court of law. That's all this bill does. I stated earlier that when it comes to perhaps looking at the other associated costs—for example, one member mentioned, “How much is it going to cost? Are school boards going to pay?” This bill doesn't address that. That's for the down the road. But right now, we need to get this in place.

I also want to thank a number of people: first of all, Sergeant Mark Gatien from the Ottawa police, and Kathleen Both, the owner of Bradley school bus lines in Ottawa. They've been running a very successful pilot project, and to them I want to say thank you. So far this pilot project has resulted in a number of charges laid, and 100% of those charges have resulted in convictions.

I also want to take a moment and thank the Independent School Bus Operators Association and, of course, the Ontario School Bus Association. These are stakeholders I sat down with, met with and kicked ideas around with. They were very instrumental in helping me come up with this bill. To them as well, thank you very much. We'll work together in the future.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

MILITARY SERVICE PIN

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 22, standing in the name of Mr. Clark.

Mr. Clark has moved private member's notice of motion number 5. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

TRANSPORTATION OF AGGREGATES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Malhi has moved private member's notice of motion number 17. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (SCHOOL BUS CAMERA SYSTEM), 2014 LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (SYSTÈME PHOTOGRAPHIQUE RELIÉ AUX AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Nicholls has moved second reading of Bill 50, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to the committee—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Justice committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to the justice committee. Agreed? Agreed.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014 / Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'obligation de faire rapport concernant la réduction des fardeaux administratifs et la Loi de 2014 sur les partenariats pour la création d'emplois et la croissance.

An Act to promote public sector and MPP accountability and transparency by enacting the Broader Public Sector Executive Compensation Act, 2014 and amending various Acts / Loi visant à promouvoir la responsabilisation et la transparence du secteur public et des députés par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur la rémunération des cadres du secteur parapublic et la modification de diverses lois.

An Act to safeguard health care integrity by enacting the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014 and by amending certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions / Loi visant à sauvegarder l'intégrité des soins de santé par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 sur le don de sang volontaire et la modification de certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.

An Act to repeal the Public Works Protection Act, amend the Police Services Act with respect to court security and enact the Security for Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act, 2014 / Loi abrogeant la Loi sur la protection des ouvrages publics, modifiant la Loi sur les services policiers en ce qui concerne la sécurité des tribunaux et édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la sécurité des centrales électriques et des installations nucléaires.

An Act respecting The Loretto Ladies' Colleges and Schools.

An Act to revive 1474486 Ontario Limited.

An Act to revive Bensfort Wood Inc.

An Act to revive Bruno's Alignment Limited.

An Act respecting Bible Baptist Temple (St. Thomas).
An Act respecting The Macdonald Stewart Community Art Centre.

An Act respecting Saint Paul University.

An Act to revive 1807041 Ontario Inc.

An Act to revive 752458 Ontario Ltd.

An Act to revive 469118 Ontario Limited.

An Act to revive 658055 Ontario Inc.

An Act to revive Walker Towne Centre Inc.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Hon. David Zimmer: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? I heard a “no.”

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Seeing that this is the last session and that we’re now going to go on our break, I would like to wish every one of you a merry Christmas, a happy Hanukkah and the best for the new year.

This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, February 17, 2015 at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1632.

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
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Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

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Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
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Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	

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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
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Peter Tabuns
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Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Président: Vacant
Vacant, Vacant
Vacant, Vacant
Vacant, Vacant
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Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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First Session, 41st Parliament

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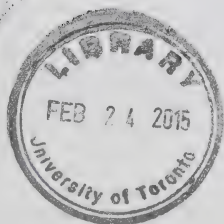
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Tuesday 17 February 2015

Mardi 17 février 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 17 February 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 17 février 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE DE L'ONTARIO

Ms. Hunter moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 56, Loi exigeant l'établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Associate Minister.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today before the House for the second reading of Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014. This bill commits our government to introducing a new mandatory provincial pension plan, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, by January 1, 2017.

Over the past several months, I have travelled across the province to discuss our plan with Ontarians. I've spoken with countless individuals from business, labour organizations and associations, families and communities. These conversations produce a diversity of opinion, but the common thread I am hearing is that people are concerned about retirement security. They are concerned that there is a gap between what they have and what they will need. This concern is exactly why we have introduced this bill: to move to close this gap and help give the people of this province financial security that they deserve in retirement.

From Thunder Bay to Toronto, from Windsor to Ottawa, I've heard from people who are concerned about their futures and their children's and grandchildren's futures. When I hear people's stories, listen to their concerns, and talk to them about their futures, it really solidifies for me why this issue is on everyone's minds and why it's such an important topic.

Retirement security is not just a financial issue. It is not economic or actuarial. It is about people. No matter where we're from, people are talking about the lives

they're looking to create now and for the future. Whether it's a young couple sitting down for a meal in their new home and talking about growing old together; new parents talking about their baby's future; or current retirees talking about how their kids and grandkids will be prepared for their golden years, all of these people are talking about their futures. Underlying all these conversations is the question of how we're going to afford those dreams now and for the future. It's in listening to these concerns that our government made the decision to take action by moving forward with the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

As Canadians, we are fortunate to have a strong, three-pillar retirement system that is already in place. Old Age Security and the guaranteed income supplement make up the first pillar, in addition to the GAINS program in Ontario. The Canada Pension Plan makes up the second, and workplace pensions and other tax-assisted savings make up the third. For several years, this system has been helping many workers in Ontario to achieve their retirement savings goals. In recent years, however, there has been a growing need for this system to evolve, to change, to meet the needs of our workforce. With a three-pillar system, we know that if one of the pillars cracks, the whole structure becomes less stable. That's what we're seeing now and on the horizon.

Several recent studies have shown that a significant portion of Ontarians are not saving enough to maintain their standard of living in retirement. In fact, the Ontario Ministry of Finance analysis suggests that about 38% of households with a primary earner between the ages of 45 and 59 may be undersaving for retirement.

There are several reasons for this. The proportion of Ontarians with workplace pension plan coverage is low and is getting lower. In 2012, only 34% of workers in Ontario—one in three—participated in a workplace pension plan. The numbers are even lower when we look at just the private sector, where only 28% are benefiting from membership in a workplace pension plan.

What this means is that people must rely on personal savings, but many aren't taking full advantage of the voluntary savings vehicles that are out there. In 2012, only 16% of people without workplace pension plans contributed to RRSPs. Add to this the fact that lifespans are increasing.

While increasing life expectancy is a sign of higher living standards and better health outcomes—something we should be proud of—it also places more pressure on personal savings, creating a need for them to stretch further. Those who have managed to put money away are

becoming worried that they might actually outlive their savings.

Many of the Ontarians I spoke to fear they will never be able to retire at all, while others are concerned that the physically demanding nature of their jobs will prevent them from continuing to work, before they are financially prepared to retire.

Add this up, and we have the potential for many workers to be living below their previous standard of living upon retirement.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that our current retirement system, while strong, is simply not meeting the needs of many Ontarians.

0910

According to a recent report released last month by the Public Policy Forum, more than any other subset of the population, a portion of middle-income earners, private-sector employees and young Canadians are more likely to experience a declining standard of living in their post-work lives. For these at-risk groups, government programs such as the Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security and guaranteed income supplement will be inadequate in providing sufficient income replacement. This trend is deeply concerning for our government.

Over the next 20 years, the number of seniors in Ontario will almost double. When a growing portion of our population faces inadequate savings, they will spend less. When that happens, consumption has the potential to slow along with growth. Further, this places pressure on our economy and those publicly funded institutions, like health care, that we hold so dear. That's not good for people. That's not good for business. That's not good for the economy.

We know that Ontarians expect leadership. That's why we need to take action now to ensure that future generations can have the financial security they deserve going forward. The cost of inaction is simply too high. Mr. Speaker, we have been clear that Ontario's preferred solution is the enhancement of the Canada Pension Plan. The CPP is a great example of a strong public institution. It is an efficient and effective program that is fully portable across the country. It is already supporting a modern and mobile labour force.

Unfortunately, the CPP does not offer a large enough benefit to ensure financial security in retirement. In 2014 the maximum CPP benefit was about \$12,500 while the average benefit paid in 2013 was only \$6,800. Ontario has advocated for CPP enhancement since 2010, with the Premier and finance minister leading national conversations on the issue. Unfortunately the federal government said no and shut down any and all discussions on this issue despite a willingness on the part of the provinces and territories to move forward.

Of course, we know that just because you don't talk about an issue, it doesn't mean it's not there, no matter how long you ignore it. When one pillar is weakened, the whole structure is unstable. That's why our government made the choice to act now and build in more retirement income security and move forward with our plan. After a

lifetime of contributing to the economy, we believe people deserve a strong and secure retirement.

The ORPP would be the first of its kind in Canada, supporting working Ontarians who do not have a comparable plan. It would build on the key features of the Canada Pension Plan to address the retirement needs of a modern, mobile, 21st-century workforce. Retirement experts recommend that people aim to replace 50% to 70% of pre-retirement earnings to maintain a similar standard of living in retirement.

As announced in budget 2014, the ORPP would aim to replace 15% of an individual's earnings, between a low earnings threshold and a maximum annual earnings threshold. It would require equal contributions to be shared between employers and employees, not exceeding 1.9% each on earnings up to an annual maximum of \$90,000. Combined with CPP, this would supplement voluntary savings measures and provide a secure retirement income floor for participants for life.

The ORPP would also be designed to ensure that benefits be earned as contributions are made. Over time, the ORPP would expand pension coverage to more than three million working Ontarians, helping to supplement their retirement income by ensuring a predictable, stable source of funds for life indexed to inflation. It would be managed by a publicly administered entity at arm's length from government, which would leverage the experience of Ontario's highly regarded public pension plans and strong financial services sector. It would pool longevity and investment risk.

We committed to consulting with Ontarians to ensure we are creating the best plan possible for the people of this province. As part of this process, in December we released a consultation paper that outlined the government's current thinking and preferred approach on key design features of the ORPP. The purpose of this paper was to gain input and feedback on essential components in the design of the ORPP, including:

- defining a comparable workplace pension plan;
- determining whether the ORPP's minimum earnings threshold would mirror the CPP's threshold of \$3,500; and
- defining how best to address the needs of self-employed individuals to achieve retirement income security.

Our government's preferred approach is to define "comparable plan" as "defined benefit" and "target benefit multi-employer." This is because these plans most closely mirror what we're trying to accomplish with the ORPP, like providing a benefit for life, including mandatory employer contributions and locking in funds. We recognize that defined contribution plans are an important part of the retirement savings landscape, but they can fall short in providing that secure retirement income floor that people need and rely on.

The second major focus is determining what the minimum earnings threshold should be. While we recognize that all Ontarians share the need to save for retirement, for some having a job does not guarantee sufficient

income to escape poverty. We do not want to place an additional financial burden on these individuals and families. At the same time, though, we need to strike a balance to ensure people are maximizing their benefits in the long term.

This is especially true for people who might experience periods of low earnings, like young people or recent immigrants. For a majority of low-income earners, Old Age Security and the Canada Pension Plan do a pretty good job in terms of income replacement. So we have presented a preferred option of mirroring the Canada Pension Plan's \$3,500 minimum earnings threshold.

Our third major focus is determining the proper treatment for the self-employed. Currently, under the rules of the federal Income Tax Act, the self-employed have a unique status as both the employee and the employer. Under these rules, individuals would not be eligible to contribute to the ORPP. What our government has done is committed to consulting on how best to assist self-employed individuals since achieving a secure retirement future is important to all Ontarians.

As well, we've made a commitment to boost financial literacy across all age groups and demographics. This way, while the ORPP will provide a secure floor, people themselves can be empowered to better use the voluntary tools out there to save.

Over the past several weeks I've been to all corners of the province. I have met with business, both large and small, of all types; labour; organizations and associations representing a wide range of workers from artists to mechanics, from doctors to sheet workers, financial planners to entrepreneurs, individuals and families from across the province, to get their views on these key design questions. We have received important feedback, Mr. Speaker, and we look forward to incorporating the ideas of Ontarians as they move forward with the design of the ORPP.

There are some who will tell you that Ontario can't afford the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan or that now is not the time to act. What I'm hearing is that we can't afford not to act. As we move forward with the ORPP, we have been mindful of the impact on business and we're taking steps to minimize these impacts.

For instance, in the budget we outlined that enrolment would occur in stages, starting with the largest employers, and contribution rates would be phased in over two years. This would especially assist small business with the transition and help lessen the short-term impact. The reality is that today the cost and administration involved in certain workplace pension plans have made it difficult, if not impossible, for some employers to offer them. The ORPP would allow employers who may not otherwise be able to offer their employees the opportunity to contribute to and accumulate benefits—to help them save for their retirement years.

We're also hearing from leading economists that the ORPP will have a positive impact on the economy. Former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge has said in his analysis that the short-term costs of such an enhance-

ment would be outweighed by the long-term economic benefits.

0920

In his 2014 report, *Macroeconomic Aspects of Retirement Savings*, Dodge states: "An increase in household savings will have a small negative effect on aggregate demand in the very short run, an effect which will automatically be offset in part through the exchange rate and other structural adjustments and which should be offset by an easier monetary policy and/or increase in public sector or agency borrowing to finance infrastructure investment. In the longer run, higher household savings would enhance growth of output and incomes."

This means that more retirement savings now would mean more capital being available for investment, which, in turn, would increase productivity and improve economic growth and job creation.

Dodge further states: "A higher saving rate would underpin higher retirement income without increased tax rates on the working population." This would support "a higher investment rate ... hence higher productivity, larger investment income, and increased government revenues."

That's good news for Ontarians and for Ontario businesses. As one small business owner from Markham rightly said at a recent consultation, "When we share a little, we gain a lot."

While not easily quantifiable, the security we can give to workers is important for business, and our economy, to be successful. We know that employees who feel more secure about their own futures tend to be more productive. More than that, we know that business owners care about the well-being of the people who work for them. This is something that I saw first-hand when I was vice-president at Goodwill Industries.

During my tenure there, the Ontario government raised the minimum wage for the first time in nearly a decade. As many will know, wages are a major expenditure of Goodwill. We worked with the government through the lead-up to the implementation. We planned and we found ways to absorb the costs. What I remember most about when the increase went into effect was not the cost to our business; it was the confidence the increase in wages gave to some of our employees. That confidence translated into more productive workers who were able to feel secure in the take-home pay that they were receiving.

We believe that a workforce with a secure pension will continue that momentum, and that confidence will spread throughout the economy. That's what we're working towards for 2017. In order to get there it is essential that we work quickly and effectively towards solidifying the details of the plan now. That is why we are asking members of this House to support this bill.

This bill outlines our government's commitment and obligations to implement the ORPP and provides an overview of some of the key principles and features of the plan. Bill 56, if passed, would require this government to establish the ORPP no later than January 1, 2017. This is an ambitious goal but, as I have explained, we know the cost of inaction is too high.

Mr. Speaker, this bill lays out some of the rules governing the participation in the ORPP. To be eligible to participate in the ORPP an individual employee would have to satisfy the following criteria: The individual would have to be between 18 and 70 years of age. The individual would have to be employed with an eligible employer in Ontario. The individual could not be participating in a comparable workplace pension plan. The individual's annual salary and wages would have to be above a minimum threshold. The individual would not be receiving a retirement benefit from the ORPP. The bill also outlines some rules concerning contributions to the plan, eligible employment, and payment of the retirement benefits and survivor benefits.

The legislation, if passed, would give authority to the government to request and collect specific information, including personal information from employers, public bodies and the federal government, and would require disclosure of the information by the employers and public bodies for the purpose of establishing the plan.

Mr. Speaker, as outlined in the budget, we will establish an entity at arm's length from the government to administer the plan. The responsibilities of that entity would include collecting and investing contributions, and administering benefits, among others.

We want to emphasize that the contributions and any accruals from investment would be held in trust for the members and other beneficiaries of the ORPP. It would be managed for the benefit of workers and will not be included as part of overall government revenues.

As we move forward, we are continuing to leverage the expertise of the members of the Technical Advisory Group on Retirement Security. I would like to extend thanks again to these individuals for their advice, opinions and support: Keith Ambachtsheer, Susan Eng, Murray Gold, Melissa Kennedy, Jim Keohane, Bill Morneau and Barbara Zvan. In addition, we are pleased to have Michael Nobrega, former CEO of OMERS, as the implementation lead.

Together, the input from Ontarians and our pension experts will ensure that we'll be able to design the best plan possible for the people of Ontario. Passing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014, is an important step in strengthening the retirement income system in our province and ensuring that Ontarians can have confidence in their retirement futures.

This bill is about securing our collective futures. It's about building, for the people, the confidence and the security they deserve. Once in place, the ORPP would help millions of Ontario workers achieve the retirement future that they deserve. Put simply, it's the right thing to do. That is why I ask the members of this assembly to support the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Comments and questions? The member from—sorry about that.

Interjection: Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I just moved. It's a new riding, Speaker. Just kidding.

Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to the associate minister's speech on Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

Boy, we see it quite differently on this side of the House. We see it more like Jack Mintz. Jack Mintz says this is ridiculous, this is regressive, and this is completely the wrong idea at the wrong time.

The minister says she has had broad consultations. I think she must call ahead and say, "You like this? Yes? Oh, we'll come and talk." "You don't like this? Ah, I can't make it." That must be the way they're doing it, because they're not going into the real places in Ontario where the real people live and work and are scared about what this government plans to do, and that is to take more money out of their pockets and more money out of employers' pockets, which translates to less jobs in Ontario. If there's one thing that we don't need in Ontario right now, it's less jobs. With the implementation of this plan, that's what we'll get.

One of the things that Jack Mintz said—and I'm looking forward to having a longer period to speak on this bill at some time.

Young people today who are barely getting by, but are able to somehow cobble together enough to make a down payment on a home, would rather see their money invested in that home than in a pension plan that is a dream way down the road. Equity in a home is the greatest asset that most people ever accumulate. If they can do that, if they can be putting their money into equity in a home, they will be far better off than with this scheme of this government, which is completely politically driven and makes no sense whatsoever. I hope that before 2017, they see the light.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments or questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: We all know that close to 66% of working Ontarians do not have a pension plan and look at their future and their elder years with angst, anxiety and fear. This is not good.

I am really privileged to come from an environment—to come from Sudbury—that is highly unionized and where lots of people have pension plans. I can tell you, it is a game-changer. It is a game-changer for my family, my 92-year-old in-laws. He has this little pension that comes every month, and they're able to budget and they're able to live their elder years in peace and security because they have budgeted all their years. Although the pension is not very big, it comes every month and they can count on it. I think that everybody in their elder years should be able to count on a little bit of money that, if you budget right, you're able to make ends meet.

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I have lots of fears about the programs that the Liberals are putting forward, because I want to make sure that the money that Ontarians are putting for their retirement will be used for that and not be used to fatten the pockets

of people working in the insurance industry and the investment brokers and everything else.

Is this a path that we should take? Sure; absolutely. We should make sure that people are able to live their elder years in dignity, with enough money to make ends meet. But the path from here to there—their goal is good, but the path they take to get there is worrisome, worrisome of money being squandered like they have done on so many other files. Look at auto insurance; look at eHealth; look at Ornge; look at everything else. It's worrisome. It has to be done right, and I'm not sure we're there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments or questions?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to add a few of my comments to the conversation this morning.

First of all, I would like to thank Associate Minister Hunter for travelling across the province and hearing from so many people and consulting with the people. It's important to have their input. I know that she has been speaking to not only businesses, to labour, to organizations, but to the people from the street, so that we can get this right. That is our intention.

I know that among her conversations, one thing is clear: Everybody is in agreement that Ontarians are not saving enough, and there is a concern about that, so we need to do something. In the absence of action from the federal government, we are coming forward with this plan.

We're taking our time to consult. I know that now, there's a consultation paper that is being released, and the plan design details are being developed, with time, in stages, so we're taking the time to get this right. We need to hear from the people. We need the people's input. It's very important.

I want to be clear: This is not a tax. This is a vehicle. It's a way to help people save for their retirement, so that they can retire with dignity, as my colleague said just a few moments ago.

We want to help businesses adjust. This is why it is planned to come into place in 2017. That will coincide with the reduction in employment insurance premiums. The enrolment would occur in stages, with the largest businesses first, and then the others following within another two years. We're being cautious.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to end by saying that the cost of inaction is too high, as Minister Hunter said. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, and good morning, Mr. Speaker. It's great to be back in the Legislature debating bills. Unfortunately, we're debating the same old job-killing payroll taxes, and that's exactly what this bill is.

You can put the associate minister out there, and she has a wonderful smile and talks about how great this is going to be for everyone across the province, but when you talk to people at these consultations, and you hear

from them and their concerns about this—the government is still forging ahead.

The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke talked about the fact that these people seem to be hand-picked that are going to these consultations.

I can tell you that I received a call from the executive director of the Quinte Arts Council. She went to the consultation that was being held in Kingston. As she was driving from Belleville to Kingston, she was fully in support of this, because it sounded so nice. How could we not look out for the futures of people in Ontario by having a retirement pension plan of our own here in Ontario? But after hearing from all the businesses that showed up at that consultation, she left there saying, "This is the worst possible thing that we could do in Ontario." She is worried that the companies that are going to be affected by this are no longer going to be able to make charitable donations to her non-profit charity because it's going to cost them more, because indeed this is a job-killing payroll tax.

Mr. Yakabuski talked about Jack Mintz, a very well-known economist.

The president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, Allan O'Dette, and all of his members are extremely concerned about this as well.

Employers are having a difficult enough time right now in this environment, trying to survive with soaring electricity prices, rising WSIB rates, and just the sagging economy that is the result of this government being in power for now 12 years, and they want to bring in more difficulties for our employers and our job creators out there. Let's think this over.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the Associate Minister of Finance for final comments.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I am very proud to rise and speak to Bill 56 today. I want to thank the honourable members who have spoken on this bill: the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, the member from Nickel Belt, my colleague from York South-Weston, and the member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Speaker, we are listening to the people of Ontario. We have consulted on the key design features of this plan. We want to ensure that we get this plan right, that we design the best possible plan for the people of Ontario.

We know that pensions are part of people's deferred compensation. It is part of their benefits, having worked a lifetime. When people retire, they deserve to retire with dignity and with some comfort.

Our plan for the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is to provide a strong retirement income floor for people so that they will have income for life. If people retire without adequate income, there is the potential that that would slow consumption. If that happens, that's not good for the individual, that's not good for business and it's not good for Ontario's economy as a whole.

As my colleague has said, the time to act is now—the time to build and to design a retirement income system that is there for the people of this province. Over three

million Ontarians would have stronger workplace-based pension coverage as a result of this plan.

One of the individuals in our consultation has said that when we give a little, we gain a lot. That is what we intend to do by the development of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. It's ensuring that we have a strong retirement system for all Ontarians.

Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to Bill 56.

I think that all of us have a certain sensitivity around the issue of a pension and the importance of a pension, but when I look at what we are looking at today, I'm reminded of the Premier's own words. Her words were, "People are not saving enough for retirement, and if we let this go unchecked, we're going to face a huge economic crisis." This she said in November 2013.

Naturally, there are a couple of reactions to this kind of comment. One of them is that you want to go and look and see if in fact it is true that it is a crisis, and are people saving? The second point you want to look at is, of all the economic crises that face this province, is this the one that requires immediate attention? On both counts, I found a different point of view.

For instance, on the issue of people not saving enough, people need to know that from 1990 to 2008, Ontarians led the country in savings. Ontarians put aside double the savings of the rest of the country. In the last two years, that has dropped down to the national average, but it is certainly clear that saving has always been part of the Ontario psyche.

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For a more up-to-date analysis, one need only go and look at the McKinsey consulting firm study that came out. Last week, they published the results of their findings: 83% of Canadians are on track to maintain their standard of living. In fact, Fabrice Morin, the principal of McKinsey, said that "if even 30% of the value of people's homes had been included as a financial asset, the proportion of Canadians with adequate savings for retirement would climb to 87%."

The comments made by Jack Mintz have already been referred to in the speeches this morning, but it's important to add here that, as he writes, while some Canadians have insufficient replacement income at retirement, it is widely agreed that three quarters to four fifths of Canadians do well, even projected into the future. This suggests that a scalpel is needed, not an ORPP sledgehammer.

It becomes very clear that this question, as the Premier says, "If ... unchecked, we're going to face a huge economic crisis"—I started to look around at some of the other crises that she seems to have little interest in, and one that struck me as very important is that which the Ontario Auditor General has indicated to us most recently. She's very concerned about the growing debt: "Although the government projects that it will not have a deficit in 2017-18, until then, it will still need to borrow

to finance annual deficits, fund infrastructure investments and refinance existing debt. 'We project that by the time the annual deficit is eliminated in 2017-18, the net debt will stand at about \$325 billion. That is about \$23,000 for every single resident of Ontario.'"

Ultimately, the question of how much debt the province should carry and the strategies the government could use to pay it down is one of government policy. However, this should not prevent the government from providing information that promotes further understanding of the issue and clarifies the choice it is making, or will make, to address the province's growing debt burden.

I want to come back to that \$23,000 that each of us owes in public debt and make sure that people understand that when we're talking about needing a pension so everyone has money to pass around and buy and sell with, they are restricted by that \$23,000 debt that they have to pay. We know that it's crowding out other spending. We know that just the interest on the debt is the third-largest item, after health and education, that this government has to deal with.

The other thing that I found interesting: I looked around, and now today when you go to see your doctor—the timer is there because there's a crisis developing in that field. The nurses have agreed to come back and go to arbitration, so they at least have come in from the cold. But they are still in the cold as far as any kind of final disposition of their circumstances.

We can look at the crisis in education, in funding for schools and the buildings, and all of the turmoil that that is creating around the province, and it seems strange that the Premier would choose this particular idea as an economic crisis and one that she is concerned about developing into a full-blown economic crisis. I'd like to know when she decides that her finances in this province demonstrate a full-blown economic crisis. When is she going to look at that? When is she going to look seriously at the impediments to making a profit in this province? When is she going to look at the cost that government regulation, legislation, red tape and burdens that have been piled on and piled on and piled on the private sector businesses in this province? Because they're the ones who are going to be looking at taking that 1.9% off the paycheque of their employees and out of their own pocket.

I have difficulty following the logic here—why this particular issue, which many agree is not an issue. I think it's a bit like being told by someone, "You don't look well. Are you okay?" Eventually you begin to have self-doubt: "Did I save enough money? Am I ready for retirement? Can I do this?" That's what has happened, and now, for the purposes of the Premier, it's going to look like a huge economic crisis.

I would argue that there are many other, much more pressing, issues. If we are looking at the private sector, who is basically the funder for this Bill 56, to provide the money for this, I think we need to look at the private sector and look at what problems they are facing today and that they're looking at the fact that they may not be able

to provide jobs. The cost of energy and the cost of competition with others in other jurisdictions are certainly putting a great deal of pressure on them. Now they find out that this would be mandatory—mandatory unless you have a comparable pension. That's a topic unto itself, but what I wanted to mention is the people whom this bill does not capture.

First of all, the people who have defined benefit pensions—that would include all of the public service and many large businesses. But there's a whole group of people that have private provided pension plans. The government has, only so far, said that it will consider "comparable." I have a vision of "comparable" taking years to decide because there are so many things that remain unanswered about how this would flow, when it would be agreed on that it was a comparable pension—are companies going to give up the pensions they've been providing? What obligations would they have to their employees? It just sounds like a legal feast while people try to figure out what it means for them and what is the best interest of their employees and, quite frankly, what they can afford.

Just to give you one example of this, a friend of a friend told me about the fact that in their employment they have 9% provided by the employer fully. They don't make any contributions to their defined contribution pension plan. So obviously there are going to be ones that are more generous than others. So the inequities in the manner in which this is going to be dealt with create all kinds of scenarios and nightmares of how you would end up with something that was fair and reasonable, whether you were comparable or not.

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I mentioned that the people who have the defined benefit are not part of this. The people in the public sector are not part of this conversation. So all of the money for this pension plan comes from the relatively small and, I'm afraid, shrinking position of the private sector. The businesses certainly look at this as being a draconian way of looking at their business situation and how they might survive this.

For those people who want to quibble about whether it's a tax or not, just be clear: It's a deduction. It comes out of your pocket. Anything that goes to the government in that kind of mandatory way, I think most people lump together as a tax.

The other group that is left out, of course, of this conversation are the people who are already retired and the people then who have no job. I think it's really important to remind people that there are 600,000 people in this province who have no job. That means they aren't eligible for a pension. The stats that the various groups have done—which I will get to later—about the layoffs that people will have to endure mean they're not in the pension conversation. As job losses come as a result of higher tax and higher deductions, then those people have no pension. When you're looking at it as a zero-sum game, obviously that's not the case.

One of the things that this government seems to forget or fail to appreciate is the fact that it's only when busi-

ness makes a profit that they are able to pay taxes. When they look at the cost of doing business continually rising all the time, this pension scheme is certainly not something that they, as a group, in the small/medium area particularly, can see their way to being able to do without doing one of two things: You either cut staff or you raise the price of goods. And if you raise the price of goods, you run the risk of pricing yourself out of the market.

The important thing here really should be what impact this is having and if it has, in fact, an impact that will hurt the very people it is designed to support. I don't think that enough care has been taken in the consultation to be able to demonstrate that in fact it wouldn't be hurting people who would theoretically benefit from this pension.

I would say that one job lost is one too many. You have just destroyed the value of doing this if it has the impact of layoffs. People have examined these stats. We've looked at the kind of potential—and job loss is very much a part of the conversation, and so I think that just on the basis of eliminating someone from the ability is too much.

The issue of "comparable" is a black hole. I think it will be a very difficult thing to try to come out with a fair process. I mentioned the fact that the people with no jobs obviously are the ones out of the system. People who are retired are out of the system. People who have defined benefits are out of the system.

But the people then who are employed, aged 18 to 70—I thought it was very interesting that we're now covering from age 18 to 70 to be eligible to make contributions

if they were working. So when we look at that issue, obviously there's a great deal of concern about the way in which this is actually going to be done, because when people see themselves as either the employer or the employee, they naturally have questions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me for just a moment. I would ask the gentlemen in the members' gallery—we do appreciate the fact that you're here to observe, but I must ask and must insist that there be no discussions up there, so that we can allow for fair and equal debate on both sides. I appreciate your being here this morning, but I would appreciate your co-operation as well. Thank you very much.

Back to the member from York—Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: So when the two groups, then, are looking at this, they naturally have questions: When must I start submitting my contribution? When would I get the first cheque? How does this work for me? When would I retire? When would I receive the cheques?—various questions. So there's a great deal of concern about the actual way in which this would work.

The bill is also silent on groups of people who obviously want to know—it's silent on the fate of part-time workers, students, and specialized groups such as the agricultural workforce. They obviously have very different kinds of work settings in many cases than other businesses, and so these are groups that have some interest in this.

I mentioned the questions: When do I begin contributing? When do I receive pension benefits? What happens if I'm laid off? What happens if I change employers? These are all natural questions that would come. The only thing I could find that might help them—at least designed, I guess, to help them—is on the ministry's own website. If you haven't been there, you should make a point of going. There's a chart there that says, "See how much Barbara, Bonnie and Bernice would get from the ORPP"—the Ontario Registered Pension Plan—"if they contribute for about 40 years." I'll repeat that: for 40 years.

So three people are shown here. One earns \$45,000, another earns \$70,000 and the third one earns \$90,000. Well, the contribution on the \$45,000-a-year salary is \$2.16 a day, and that's matched by the employer. The contribution of someone with a \$70,000 salary is \$3.46 a day, again matched. The \$90,000 salary contributes \$4.50 per day, so we're looking at \$9 a day contributed.

The point I want to make here is the fact that this shows if they contribute for 40 years. So while we're talking about the bill, I think it's important to realize that this is what the ministry is saying, and they are looking it as a 40-year term. That's not uncommon, by the way, for people to look at the maturity of a pension to be about 40 years, but it doesn't give constituents of mine much comfort seeing something like this, because they've heard the minister say that they are going to be accepting payments starting on January 1, 2017. So with that as the only real date given, and a chart on the ministry's website that says, "You've got to contribute for 40 years before this would be what would you get," I think it should serve as a sobering influence on people who see this as an opportunity that will come by them very quickly.

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I also thought about \$4.50 a day. I don't know about you, but that somehow had a ring to it; that used to be a lunch. So the idea of \$9 a day—oh, and what will the \$9 a day give you? It will give you, after the 40 years, \$12,815 a year. I think that's a really good chart to have a look at to get a sense of what some of all of this means.

I touched on the issue of comparable, and I want to come back to it for a moment because it is so important to be able to appreciate—how are you going to measure this? We have no idea how the government is going to measure this. At one point it was floated out that they were going to only look at defined benefit contributions as a comparable pension. Then, that seemed to sort of fade away and there wasn't the same reference made to it. But I think it's really important to give some kind of reassurance to those people, both employed and employers, of the safety of a private plan. People have been doing this on their own for years and they may have a level of satisfaction and they certainly have a lot of money already invested. What happens to that if it's deemed not comparable? There's clearly a cost involved in making all these changes, if they were to be made, and a cost involved to wind up a plan, never mind whether that windup is fair.

I visualize a great deal of red tape going on in this and possibly some sort of tribunal to decide fairness about a pension or whether it's comparable, and a huge amount of effort made, and therefore cost, to be able to move already existing pensions into conformity or wind them up. Any of those things requires time, expertise and cost. I think that people are well to be skeptical of that.

The other thing that nobody has talked about is the fact that Toronto is the financial centre. All of the existing plans are being currently looked after by members of that Toronto financial centre. I don't think that I've seen any analysis or any look—I think because it's a bit premature, but it nevertheless begs to happen—that those institutions that have currently functioning pension plans that they provide for their clients—what happens there? What happens if they are deemed non-comparable? Do we see an unravelling of the financial business community in this city because the government has chosen to interfere and make decisions for us? I think that there's a real concern about that issue and the financial centre, the impact that it would have.

The last thing that I think I have time for is to touch on the issue of enabling legislation. Bill 56 is enabling legislation. The associate minister made reference to the fact that there had to be certain privacy laws that had to be adjusted in order to allow the ministry—I assume it would be the Ministry of Finance. So it all has to be general comments and enabling legislation.

I think it's really important for people to understand what that means. If you were to read Bill 56, you would see that there is very little—almost no—detail in it at all, in terms of the way in which it works. In defence, the ministry says, "We went out and consulted on those issues." But the problem is those things that are left to regulations. Regulations are not a public process. The people who are invited are invited by the ministry to come and lend a hand to the details. One of the problems with that means that the kinds of questions that I have raised on behalf of people who are interested in this—people who want to know, "When does my cheque come? How long do I have to pay in? What happens if I move? What happens if I get laid off?"; all those kinds of normal questions that people would have—none of those are dealt with in Bill 56. There is nothing there to give anyone any sense of where we're going with this in the details. No one is able to read that bill and say, "Oh, my circumstances would be included in the comparable," or, "My circumstances would not." There's nothing to give anybody any confidence, because of the fact that this is enabling legislation.

What that means is that, once again, we're left in the dark until those regulations have been made. At that point, they get posted, but it's the stroke of the cabinet pen that determines what those regulations look like.

I think it's really important for people to understand that what I'm suggesting here today is, first of all, when the Premier said, "People are not saving enough for retirement, and if we let this go unchecked, we're going to face a huge economic crisis," this is a crisis that she

has chosen. This is not one of the many—I think three police investigations might hit that list too. It has nothing to do with the kind of severity of the crisis that the Auditor General has pointed out. It has nothing to do with the severity of what we're watching outside, that doctors and nurses and educators particularly, just to name three, are looking at a crisis in their own circumstances.

We are talking about a bill that provides us with no detail of how it's going to impact.

One of the fundamental reasons for people being elected to the Legislature is to be able to be a conduit both ways between the electorate and the legislators. What we find here is that this is a murky kind of situation that we're in. All that the businesses know, and all that we know, is that the private sector is on the hook. It is the businesses that are the ones that actually create wealth in this province and are the ones that are expected to dig deeper and shell out the money. That's all they know at this point. That is the plan.

I think it's reasonable for people to think that that's not good enough. It's not good enough when people like Jack Mintz say that this is a sledgehammer when we need a scalpel.

People aren't denying that there aren't some people that have not saved for circumstances. That's not the issue. That's not the bill before us. The bill before us will in fact, I believe, damage those it purports to want to help. When one person is laid off because of this shift in the financial responsibilities of an employer to provide for all employees and he can't do that, that one person is a demonstration of the fallacy that lies at the basis of this bill.

I want to finish with where I will begin the next time I have the opportunity, and that's a quote that is the giveaway to explain this whole process that we're engaged in. It's a quote from the 2014 budget, and it's important to end on this note because it's where I will begin next time:

"By unlocking value from its assets and encouraging more Ontarians to save through a proposed new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, new pools of capital would be available for Ontario-based projects such as building roads, bridges and new transit. Our strong alternative financing and procurement model, run by Infrastructure Ontario, will allow for the efficient deployment of this capital in job-creating projects."

Well, that's really why we need to get that 1.9% out of everybody's pocket. That's where the money really is designed to go.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I think I'm close to time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member from York-Simcoe for your debate this morning. You will be allowed to continue with your debate at the appointed time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Seeing as how it is now almost 10:15, this Legislature stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF MEMBER FOR SUDBURY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received from the Chief Electoral Officer and laid upon the table a certificate of the by-election in the electoral district of Sudbury.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): I have a letter that reads as follows: "A writ of election dated the 7th day of January, 2015, was issued by the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of the province of Ontario, and was addressed to Ellen Kerr, returning officer for the electoral district of Sudbury, for the election of a member to represent the said electoral district of Sudbury in the Legislative Assembly of this province in the room of Joe Cimino, who, since his election as representative of the said electoral district of Sudbury, has resigned his seat. This is to certify that, a poll having been granted and held in Sudbury on the 5th day of February, 2015, Glenn Thibeault has been returned as duly elected as appears by the return of the said writ of election dated the 13th day of February, 2015, which is now lodged of record in my office."

It is signed by Greg Essensa, the Chief Electoral Officer, and dated, in Toronto, February 16, 2015.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier, government House leader.

Mr. Thibeault was escorted into the House by Ms. Wynne and Mr. Naqvi.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have the honour to present to you and to the House Glenn Thibeault, member-elect for the electoral district of Sudbury, who has taken the oath and signed the roll and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let the honourable member take his seat.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: It's delightful to introduce Gwen Davis, née Sutcliffe. She's a former Hepworthian and she actually babysat me as a child. I trust she never thought she'd ever see me here. Welcome.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to welcome a contingent of corrections officers. I have Randy Simpraga and Carsten Schiller from Local 135, which is down my way in Windsor. I'd also like to welcome James Nowe, Raffaella Tassone and Greg Arnold as well.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Speaker, it's my great pleasure today to welcome Adrian and Draupadi Quinn, along with Katelyn Crane, Brooke Murphy and Tamara Elstubb. They're from Kaley's Acres. Kaley's Acres was recently awarded the Premier's Award for agricultural innovation. We are excited to have them back here today visiting us, as they bring bags of kale chips for all members of this House to enjoy. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It gives me great pleasure to introduce, in the members' gallery this morning, Ruth Howe.

Ruth is a long-time friend. I'm glad to have you here in the members' gallery at Queen's Park. Welcome.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome Monte Vieselmeyer, who is the co-chair of the management-employee relations committee with the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, and all the correctional, probation and parole officers in the House today. Thank you very much for your service.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure for me to introduce, on behalf of my colleague Christine Elliott, Chris Eaton. Chris Eaton is the dad of Riley, who is a page serving here. Welcome.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd ask the House to join me in welcoming members from OPSEU here in the House. We have Kulvir Saini, Gordon Cobb, Pete Wright, Len Elliott and Monte Vieselmeyer. Thank you so much for being here.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to welcome Smokey Thomas and others from OPSEU here today. Thank you for all the work you do every single day.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to introduce Allison St-Jean from my community office in Ottawa. She's in the east gallery along with Elise Roiron, who is my legislative assistant here at Queen's Park. Thank you.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It gives me great pleasure to welcome members of the Canadian HIV/AIDS Black, African and Caribbean Network who are joining us here in the Legislature. Joining us is Shannon Ryan, Valerie Pierre-Pierre and Wangari Tharao.

This group is a national network of organizations and individuals dedicated to responding to issues related to HIV and AIDS in Canada's African, Caribbean and black community. I'd like to welcome them to the Legislature. They were here on February 7, when they had an awareness day. I just want to say thank you for being here today, and thank you for your hard work on behalf of all Ontarians.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to introduce Dr. Kelly Hoogeveen, who is here. She is the mother of new page Niko Hoogeveen, who is from Alcona Glen in Barrie.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: May I just begin by congratulating the new member for Sudbury, Mr. Thibeault? Welcome to the House.

Interjection: Where is he?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Where is he?

Interjection: He's over here.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Oh, you're over there. I can't see that far, Glenn. Anyway, welcome.

My question is to the Premier, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the Sudbury by-election was not without a dark cloud cast over the electoral process. Caught on tape is a discussion between your deputy chief of staff, Pat Sorbara,

saying to your former candidate, Andrew Olivier, "We should have the broader discussion about what it is that you'd be most interested in doing, and then decide what shape that could take that would fulfill that is, what I'm getting at, whether it's a full-time or a part-time job in a const office, whether it is appointments, supports, or commissions, whether it is also going on the" executive—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Jim Wilson:—"we would just need to better understand what is it that you most want to do."

Premier, that sure sounds like a bribe to me, and the OPP obviously—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'd ask the member to withdraw, and then your time is up, so please withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let me—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You have the right to remain silent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean-Carleton will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I will make it clear now: We will have order.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I just want to congratulate the new member for Sudbury and to welcome him to our caucus.

He ran a positive campaign in Sudbury. He campaigned on the issues, and he has been and will be a strong voice for the people of Sudbury. We are thrilled to have him here at Queen's Park.

1040

As I have said repeatedly—I have said in public, I have said to Elections Ontario and I will continue to say—I had, in my role as the leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, made a decision to appoint a candidate in Sudbury, and at the same time—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound will withdraw.

Mr. Bill Walker: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You have a 10-second wrap-up.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: At the same time, I worked very hard to try to keep the past candidate involved in the party. That's what those conversations were about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: Premier, your spokesperson has said that "any suggestion that anything was offered in exchange for any action is false," yet on the tape your deputy chief of staff clearly says that the new member for Sudbury would actually be very open—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): President of Treasury Board, come to order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —to a job in his office as a constituency assistant. That is offering him a government job.

Pat Sorbara also said: “Let’s look at other ways ... you can be involved,” and that some of these other ways would allow Mr. Olivier to “meet with the Premier regularly.”

Premier, honourable ministers in the past have voluntarily stepped down for actions of their staff because it’s the right thing to do. Will you at the very least demand that your deputy chief of staff, Pat Sorbara, step aside?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member opposite well knows, the duties of the deputy chief of staff in my office are separate from the ongoing investigation. They’re separate from any role in a by-election, so it is not necessary.

The member opposite also knows that, at the request of the opposition parties, there is an investigation going on. The authorities are examining any allegations, and those investigations are independent of the work that is going on in my office.

As I have said repeatedly, any suggestion that anything was offered in exchange for any action is false, Mr. Speaker. I had made a decision that I was going to appoint a candidate in the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton will come to order—second time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): President of the Treasury Board, come to order—second time.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The context in which those conversation took place was the context in which I had decided to appoint a candidate. Any of those conversations were about keeping a young man involved in the party, and quite frankly, I think it’s the responsibility of a leader to try to keep past candidates involved in the party. I think that’s part of our responsibility.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier. I think the Premier misses the point of the law in this case, and the law is clear. This young man wanted to stay involved in the party, he had indicated that he was going to run in the nomination process again, so he wasn’t, as you said in your news conference this morning, a “past candidate” or a “failed candidate,” and therefore you could offer him a job. He was actively in the candidate process, and you intervened. The allegations are—and they’re pretty clear on the tape to me—that a job offer was made or other arrangements could be made, and that may very well be found to be against the Criminal Code and against the Election Act.

Do you really want someone in your office—your deputy chief of staff—who has criminal-wrongdoing

allegations hanging over her? How can that person possibly serve the people of Ontario when she’s so tainted in terms of reputation and it’s hurting your reputation and it’s hurting the reputation of the Premier of the province of Ontario and the office that you hold?

Will you do the right thing, the honourable thing, and get rid of this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The number of leaps that the member opposite makes in that question is quite remarkable.

I made a decision, which is my prerogative as the leader of the party, to appoint a candidate. That decision was made. There was not a nomination race because I made a decision that we were going to appoint a candidate. I decided, Mr. Speaker, that having Glenn Thibeault as the candidate for us in Sudbury was the right decision. I made that decision and then we tried to keep a young man, who had been a past candidate, involved in the party. That’s what happened, Mr. Speaker. That’s what those conversations were about.

Quite frankly, I had decided that I did not want that young man to find out that I had appointed a candidate in the newspaper. That’s why I had a conversation with him. I wanted him to know that we wanted him to be involved, and I think it’s the responsibility of all leaders to keep people involved in the party.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.
Thank you.

Start the clock. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Last week was the two-year anniversary of you becoming Premier, but it was also two years ago last week that the gas plant files were deleted. The OPP has since recovered thousands of gas plant emails deleted by Liberal staffers. Many of those staffers testified in the justice committee hearings and, like you, took an oath to solemnly swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Those staffers responded to the many freedom-of-information requests on the gas plant scandal. With the knowledge and confidence that all their files were deleted, they boldly swore, “I have no responsive emails.”

Premier, will you launch an investigation into which of your staffers lied under oath?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We’re going to start tiptoeing around it—I’m going to make a ruling: Withdraw, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader is going to want to speak to the process, but I will just say that the member opposite knows that hundreds of thousands of documents went before the

committee. There were dozens of witnesses who spoke to the issues. We opened up the process.

Two years ago, when I came into office, in this office, I said we were going to open up the process and we were going to make sure that the committee was able to ask the questions that they needed to ask and bring the witnesses on any issue that they deemed to be relevant. And that happened.

I'm encouraged that the report has been written. I understand that it will be released shortly. That's a good thing. I think that it was very important that the committee was allowed to do its work, and it was allowed to do its work because we opened up the process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Again to the Premier: One freedom-of-information request asks nine senior staff for all their files related to the gas plant scandal from January 1 to October 1, 2012. Five Liberal staffers wrote back, "I have no records," but the OPP then recovered emails from Laura Miller and others relating to the gas plants within that time period. Laura also told the justice committee under oath that she had no documents.

Premier, when people file a freedom-of-information request, when MPPs ask questions in committee, they need to know the answers are truthful. Laura Miller, now executive director of the BC Liberals, hasn't spoken to the OPP. When are you going to show some moral leadership, call Premier Christy Clark, and demand she send Laura Miller back to Ontario to co-operate with the OPP?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Let me first of all start by welcoming the new member of provincial Parliament from Sudbury to this House. I look forward to working with him.

Speaker, as the member opposite noted himself, there is an active OPP investigation going on in the matter. I think we should let the Ontario Provincial Police do its work when it comes to any allegations there may be.

What we know is that this Premier, when she became the leader of this government, immediately opened up the process and ensured that hundreds of thousands of new documents were submitted to the committee. Speaker, the justice committee, as you know, has been looking into the matter for the last two years. They have heard from about 93 witnesses, and they have had ample information to consider in order to ensure that they can provide guidance to the government when it comes to major issues that the committee was looking at.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Final supplementary.

1050

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, let's go back to that freedom-of-information request where five Liberal staffers wrote back, "I have no records."

According to an affidavit, in her role as special assistant to the Premier, Beckie Codd-Downey was to "identify individuals who may have responsive records." In December, the OPP recovered gas plant emails seized on computers from the Premier's office. Much to our shock and surprise, here's an email from the very same Beckie Codd-Downey. It reads, "Talked to Dave. Will delete my" emails. Talk about the fox running the hen-house. She was in charge of identifying the very individuals who may have gas plant emails but didn't put herself on the list.

Premier, why is Beckie Codd-Downey employed in your government today?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in my previous response, this Premier and this government have opened up government significantly. We have implemented significant record-keeping reforms such as mandatory staff training.

In addition, Speaker, we have passed a very broad accountability act which implements key recommendations from the privacy commissioner, such as ensuring the preservation of records and prohibiting the wilful destruction of records with the intent to deny our right of access to records, and introducing a new offence with a fine of up to \$5,000 for the wilful destruction of records.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North, please withdraw.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw.

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Again? I withdraw. Is that okay?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's try it without the editorial.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please. Wrap up.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, these are very important changes that this government has undertaken. The former Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, has credited our government for improving record-keeping across government.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Ontario families are looking for the government to make life a little bit easier, but instead of dealing with people's problems and helping families, this Premier seems very busy with her problems, whether it's three police investigations or putting her political interests first. Meanwhile, moms, dads, teachers and community leaders are worried because the Liberals are closing their neighbourhood schools. Once these schools are closed, Speaker, they are gone for good.

Will the Premier put her own interests and the interests of the Liberal Party on hold, pay attention to what

matters to people, and stop allowing schools to be closed and sold off?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question from the leader of the third party. I will answer the issue around the school consolidations and closures, but I wanted to speak to the work that we've been doing over the last two years, because she referenced helping people in the province, and I just want to go over some of the things that we have done.

We've extended our investment in affordable housing by \$801 million. We've increased the minimum wage. We've increased legal aid. We've increased the Ontario Child Benefit by \$100. As of this past September, all four- and five-year-olds in Ontario have access to full-day kindergarten. We've strengthened community and developmental services. We've helped 8,000 families who didn't have help before and who have help now.

Mr. Speaker, those are all initiatives that we have taken in order to help people in this province, in order to help people in their day-to-day lives and help the families of this province. That's the work that we've been doing over the last two years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Here's my list of the Liberal record. Across Ontario, nursing positions are being eliminated, and for over two weeks, 3,000 home care nurses were walking the picket line in this province. The Liberals have cut hospital budgets, Speaker. Ontarians face longer wait times for home care and for long-term care. The Liberals have attacked the women and men who provide health care services in this province.

The treasury is full, however, when it comes to sweetheart P3 deals or paying for scandals like Ornge and the gas plants. When a Liberal needs a helping hand, the good times keep on rolling, Speaker, but when it comes to health care, the Liberals say that our cupboards are bare here in this province.

Will the Premier start funding health care properly and end the Liberal waste and corruption that plagues this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the question seems to have shifted, but let me just take this moment to say that I'm very pleased that the negotiations were completed and that there's an agreement with the CCAC nurses. That's a good thing.

I actually would have thought that the leader of the third party would respect and honour the collective bargaining process. The fact is, when there is a disagreement—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sergeant-at-Arms.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Wrap up, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was actually talking, Mr. Speaker, about a collective bargaining process that reached a successful conclusion, and we have agree-

ments. I hope that we can come to an agreement with OPSEU. That is absolutely our intention: to bargain at the table and to come to an agreement.

On the question of health care: The funding for health care continues to increase year over year in this province. We are making more investments in health care. We will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Perhaps this Premier is not aware, but going into arbitration is not the successful conclusion of a collective bargaining process.

But do you know what, Speaker? The OPSEU members who were out on the front lawns of Queen's Park this morning remind us about how important our public services are to the people of this province. People want to see—and expect—their corrections facilities being safely and properly staffed, day in and day out. They want to know that their ODSP and social services cheques that are supposed to be going out to the most vulnerable people in Ontario are actually going out and reaching those folks. They want to know that troubled children are getting the help and protection that they deserve.

But rather than investing in services and the people who deliver those services, the Premier is gutting services and ordering up pink slips for the people who deliver those services. Don Drummond said the Liberals were going to fire 100,000 people. Will the Premier stop this attack now and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I would just say to the leader of the third party that she knows full well that when both parties agree to arbitration, that's part of the process. That's what has happened.

I want to pick another point out of that grab bag of things that the leader of the third party talked about: talking about investing in the people who deliver the services in this province. I think it's actually shameful that the leader of the third party was not supportive of a budget that invested more in personal support workers and gave them an increase, one that they have not had for many years, and that invested in early childhood educators and developmental support workers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Increasing the salaries of those people who do the essential and vital work of looking after some of the most vulnerable people in this province is absolutely a hallmark of our budget. The leader of the third party didn't support it, and doesn't even acknowledge that those people are getting support because of the changes that we have made.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. I'd like to think that people actually get into politics because they believe in public services. I want to

believe, in fact, that integrity and respect once mattered to the Premier of this province. Members of every party owe it to Ontarians to restore their faith in government. It's time to start undoing the damage done by the Premier and her party by showing that integrity and trust, in fact, do matter.

1100

Will the Premier show leadership so that we can begin the important task of rebuilding confidence and trust in our political institutions and government by putting Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed on leave?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have been very clear about the actions that I took in Sudbury, and I will continue to be clear. I made it clear that I made a decision as the leader of the party to appoint a candidate. Having done that, there were conversations with the past candidate about keeping him involved in the party. That's the decision that I made. Those are the actions that we took.

I had made a decision that Glenn Thibeault was the candidate that we wanted as our candidate in Sudbury. He will be a wonderful MPP for the people of Sudbury. The conversations with the former candidate were about keeping him involved because I had decided that I was going to appoint a candidate to run in the by-election.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In its investigation into bribery in the Sudbury by-election, the OPP says that "reference to the Premier's authority threatens the appearance of the government's integrity"—not just the Premier's personal integrity, not just the integrity of the Premier's office, not just the caucus or the cabinet or the candidate for that matter; the government's integrity. And yet the Premier insists on protecting Liberal insiders Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed.

According to Mr. Lougheed, the Premier was behind the offer to Mr. Olivier, so the Premier can also direct him and Pat Sorbara to step aside until this investigation is complete. Will the Premier actually show some leadership and begin to rebuild the public trust by doing the right thing?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said repeatedly, any suggestion that anything was offered in exchange for any action is false. There was no specific offer. There was no commitment. There was a discussion about how this young man might want to stay involved.

I have to say, the people of Sudbury had all this information when they went to the polls. They made a decision. They have sent Glenn Thibeault to Queen's Park, and I think we need to respect and honour the decision of the people of Sudbury.

What I have to do as the leader and what I have to do as a politician is answer questions. Of course, the opposition have asked for an investigation; that investigation is happening. It's taking place. We will co-operate. My responsibility is to answer honestly. That is what I have done, and I will continue to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: A few short months ago, the Premier apologized for scandals and cover-ups. "It won't happen again," she claimed during the election campaign. "I learned my lesson," she said. But all the Premier learned was to deny, obstruct and ignore the truth. She learned to protect Liberal insiders at all costs and that nobody is ever held to account under her watch.

Now she's at the centre of a bribery scandal. The OPP are investigating. Elections Ontario is investigating. There is a culture of arrogance and entitlement in the Premier's office and the Premier is refusing to clean it up. This does not pass the smell test.

Ontarians deserve better. I certainly believe that. My caucus believes that. I believe the other opposition party believes that. Does the Premier agree that Ontarians deserve better?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think—I know—that Ontarians deserve to understand exactly what happened, and what I have said is exactly what happened. I made a decision as the leader, which is my prerogative as the leader of the party, to decide on appointing a candidate. I made that decision. I didn't want the past candidate to learn from the newspaper that I had made that decision. So yes, I had a conversation with the past candidate, and those conversations were about how that young person might want to stay involved in the party.

Quite frankly, I would expect that the leaders of the opposition parties, of any party, would want to keep someone involved if they had been involved as a candidate in the party. I think that's a responsibility that we have as leaders. That's what I did. We have a new member for the riding of Sudbury. The people of Sudbury made that decision, and I think we need to respect the decision of the constituents of Sudbury.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Premier. As you're well aware, Premier, your Sudbury Liberal king-maker, Mr. Gerry Lougheed, Jr., told your former candidate, Andrew Olivier, that "I come to you, on behalf of the Premier..." and that "They," meaning your office, "would like to present"—in this case Mr. Olivier—"options in terms of appointments, jobs, whatever."

I think, Premier, that this backroom political dealing seems a little dubious—so dubious, as a matter of fact, that the OPP is investigating Mr. Lougheed, a man who happens to be your appointee to the Greater Sudbury Police Services Board. I just don't see how he can lead a police services board while being under investigation for bribery by the OPP.

Premier, will you remove Mr. Lougheed from the board until the OPP finishes their investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, police services boards are responsible for the provision of adequate and effective policing services in the municipality. I understand that the Sudbury police services board addressed this issue last week. They took a vote, Mr. Speaker, and they voted to

have Mr. Lougheed remain in place. They made that decision. We don't direct the police services board. They made that decision. They want to keep him involved.

To the preamble in the member's question, I talked about wanting to keep this young man involved. There are many ways that people can stay involved, and for all of those things, there would be an application process. There would have been a process through which he would have had to go to get any of those positions. Those were options; those were suggestions about how that young person might want to stay involved. As I've said, I think those are conversations that I would hope leaders would have with past candidates on all sides of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Premier, Mr. Lougheed informed Mr. Olivier that he would tell the Premier to call him. He coached Mr. Olivier to ask—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy House leader, second time.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: —and I quote, “... ‘what are you giving me, for me to step down, that is worthwhile?’ ... And I think that's the point, only you and [the Premier] can have that conversation.” Those are Mr. Lougheed's comments to Mr. Olivier.

Well, Premier, either you were aware of specific job offers or Mr. Lougheed was making unacceptable claims on your behalf. This is a possible breach of the code of conduct that all members of the police services boards are subject to, Premier, and I've asked the Ontario Civilian Police Commission to investigate.

So, Premier, were you aware of a job offer? Will you remove Mr. Lougheed from the board until the OPP finishes their investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to restate what the Premier said. I think it's a very important point, that police services boards are responsible for the provision of adequate and effective police services within their municipality. Among their duties, police services boards generally determine the objectives and priorities with respect to police services within their community and establish policies for the effective management of those police services.

Speaker, the Police Services Act does not give the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services any authority to remove a board member, as all board members of a police services board are appointed by the province or municipal council and they're subject to a code of conduct which is in the regulations under the Police Services Act.

In this particular instance, as we know, the police services board looked at this matter, they considered this matter, and they voted to keep the chair in his position. If there is a breach, OCPC has to investigate that matter, Speaker.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, my question through you to the Premier: Did the Premier personally make the decision to offer a bribe to Andrew Olivier not to run for office?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I'll ask the member to withdraw.

1110

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, it's in the Election Act—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do you want to restate the question?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, let me try this way: Section 96.1 of the Election Act has a section entitled Bribery. It deals with how you're not allowed to do the kinds of things that happened in the last election. So to rephrase my question, utilizing the language of the Election Act, under section 96.1, Bribery, did the Premier personally make the decision to offer that bribe to Mr. Olivier or not?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Whether it says that in the act—you can't use that language in this House and you can't accuse a member of bribery. That's the ruling, and it will not happen again. Withdraw.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay, I withdraw—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No. Let's get this clear: Withdraw, and then I'll explain to you what I'd like to offer you. Just do the withdrawal, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I did. Again?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sorry, I'll do it again: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member to rephrase the question in a way that does not use the language that is not acceptable in the House.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I don't know. We debated this legislation in the House. It was a word used in the legislation, but I'll try. Did the Premier personally make the decision to offer a “blank” to Andrew Olivier not to run for office?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Let me apologize if I'm not being clear enough. First of all, you cannot say anything indirectly that is meaning the direct word. Second of all, it's not the word or the quoting of the law; it's the accusation of a member being part of that or saying that. So I'm going to ask the member—if one more time you attempt to say the word again, I'll just pass.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, I will try again. I used the word “blank,” so I'm going to try another word. Did the Premier personally make the decision to offer something to Mr. Olivier that was contrary to section 96.1 of the Election Act?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well said.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The decision that I made, the personal decision I made—

Interruption.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's just my bracelet—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know. It just fell off.

The decision I made was to appoint a candidate in Sudbury. I made that decision, so there was no nomination race; there was no other process. The process was that I decided to appoint Glenn Thibeault as our candidate. Then I decided that I would want to keep the former candidate involved, and so that's what the conversation was about. It wasn't about anything other than keeping him involved as a part of the Liberal team, as a part of the family, because he had been our candidate, and I knew it was a difficult process when the leader makes a decision to appoint. But I had made that decision, and that was the personal decision that I made in this process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, that's pretty contrary to the facts, Madam Premier. When you look at the recordings and you read the transcripts, it's pretty clear what happened. You made an offer way before he actually—that all that had happened.

Let me ask you this: When did the Premier tell the deputy chief of staff, Pat Sorbara, or the Liberal king-maker, Mr. Lougheed Jr.—and offered them something that was contrary to Section 96.1 of the Election Act, entitled Bribery?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The premise of the question is that the member opposite knows what was going on in my mind at every moment and knows when I made the decision to appoint, and he doesn't know that, Mr. Speaker. What I'm saying is that the decision to appoint—I had already made the decision to appoint. That decision had been made. Glenn Thibeault was the person whom I wanted as our candidate in Sudbury. That decision was made, and the conversations were about keeping the past candidate involved.

That's the truth, Mr. Speaker. I've told Elections Ontario that. I will continue to tell anyone who asks me that that is what happened. That is why we were having those conversations.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: I want to thank everyone for the warm welcome.

My question today is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Ontario's mineral sector has a tremendous impact on job creation across the province and is vital to the economy in the north, particularly in my hometown of Sudbury.

Sudbury has a rich history when it comes to mining. The Sudbury basin has been producing ore for over 100 years, and the local economy relies on a healthy mining industry. I'm proud that Ontario remains the top

jurisdiction for exploration and production of minerals in Canada.

Will the minister please inform the House on the status of mining in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: That is a great question. I want to start, of course, by welcoming the member from Sudbury to this Legislature. We are very proud to have him on our team. I know he'll be a very strong voice for the north and for the constituents of the Sudbury riding.

As the member mentioned, Ontario is the leading jurisdiction in Canada for exploration and production of minerals. People need to know that there are currently 43 mines operating in Ontario, and the potential for growth continues to be very significant. There are actually over 30 mineral projects in the advanced stages of exploration right now in the province. The number of direct jobs in the mineral sector: production, 26,000 in 2014, and, in the supply and services sector, another 41,000 jobs.

Our government continues to work hard with the mining sector to create jobs and enhance economic prosperity through responsible development of the province's mineral sector. We know that the member from Sudbury will be a great help in making that happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: The mineral exploration industry is an incredibly important contributor to our provincial economy. I know personally how essential fostering a strong mineral sector is to ensuring that northern Ontario remains on a positive track.

In Sudbury, we have seen the benefits of a diversifying economy from mining to fabrication and processing, and a growing mining supply and service industry. We continue to see the different ways this is spurring innovation across our community, across our province and across our country. I am pleased that the outlook for mine expansion in northern Ontario continues to be a promising one.

I understand that there have been several announcements of new investments in mining in Ontario. Can the minister elaborate on those most recent mining developments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The fact is that 2015 is off to a tremendous start. In January, New Gold moved a step closer to construction of their virtually \$1-billion Rainy River gold project by securing federal and provincial environmental assessment approvals. That's a very exciting project in the Rainy River area.

This month, Centerra Gold, a global mining company, announced that they'd be investing in the province of Ontario. Centerra's \$300-million partnership with Premier Gold Mines will help advance northwestern Ontario's Hardrock gold project in the Greenstone/Geraldton area—great stuff.

But it's not just in the northwest, Speaker. As the member mentioned, the Sudbury area is home to five projects, including KGHM International's Victoria project and Vale's Victor-Capre project, both of which are large nickel-copper-PGM-rich deposits.

Our government is excited by these opportunities. We're going to keep looking forward to it. We're looking

forward to the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada conference coming up in a week or so in which we'll join you; we hope you'll join us.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, you recently announced that your seamless rollout of SAMS now requires a third-party adviser to tell us what front-line workers have been telling you for months: SAMS is not working. This is all too lame. We know that "adviser" is simply a code word for "consultant."

Minister, given your government's track record in signing sweetheart deals with consultants and other insiders, will you disclose who this consultant is and exactly how much the taxpayers of Ontario are going to pay for this?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: I also would like to congratulate our new member from Sudbury.

I'd like to explain to this House a number of the actions that our government has taken in relation to SAMS since we last sat in December.

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First of all, the initial issues encountered in November involving the accuracy and delivery of benefit payments have been addressed. Overall, SAMS has now processed three successful pay runs for both ODSP and OW monthly payments. This means that SAMS has processed over two million payments to our most vulnerable families.

Because of the various issues that were raised with me, I've spent the last several weeks visiting a number of ODSP and Ontario Works offices across the province, and I've heard first-hand from workers the challenges with SAMS and listened to their experiences during the transition. I've also talked to dozens of mayors and other municipal officials clearly expressing their concerns and the concerns of their staff.

I do want to thank all these hard-working staff for them ensuring our most vulnerable—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, my question is back to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Your government is saying it hasn't got money for doctors, nurses and affordable housing, but when it comes to hiring consultants, there's never a shortage of money for them.

Minister, you recently poured an additional \$16 million into the SAMS boondoggle to try to save face for your government. This money could have paid for a lot of food, heat and hydro, dental appointments and housing for our most vulnerable citizens.

I ask again, Minister: How much more is it going to cost the taxpayers to cover your incompetence and mismanagement? What is the timeline for the minor glitch to be fixed? Most importantly, when will the

people who are hurting the most as a result of your boondoggle receive the services they so need and much deserve?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Certainly, as a result of my investigations over the last couple of months, I do agree that the implementation of SAMS must be improved. In the coming weeks and months, we will be taking specific actions to deal with immediate issues and improve the implementation of SAMS.

I have decided that we will select an independent third party adviser who will provide further advice and assistance, evaluate our progress and recommend actions to help us reach our goals. Our municipal partners and staff delivering services to clients will be fully engaged in this review.

We have established a technical working group that now is going to include front-line workers. In fact, members from CUPE have already been part of that working group on a couple of occasions to bring their perspective to the table.

We need to make this system, complicated as it is, simpler and more user-friendly. To this end, we will be requesting the services of a new set of fresh eyes on the issues while we continue to improve SAMS.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. OPP investigator Detective Erin Thomas says, "I believe the words spoken by both Loughheed and Sorbara to Olivier assists me in my belief the Criminal Code offence has been committed." Loughheed and Sorbara were both speaking on behalf of the Premier. Is the Premier now suggesting that they were acting on their own behalf? Or were they acting on her behalf?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important that the people of Ontario actually understand what's going on here. You see, Speaker, the NDP won the riding of Sudbury in the last general election. Five months later, the member resigned.

We ran an excellent candidate, who happened to have been a member of the New Democratic Party before he decided that Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Ontario Liberal Party understood the issues of the north and could drive positive change. A superb candidate with a superb track record chose to run for the Liberal Party.

The NDP, understandably, are not happy that the people of Sudbury rejected their candidate and elected our candidate, and I think it's time that the NDP actually accepted the will of the people of Sudbury, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I think the people of Ontario should know that in response to a serious question about criminal allegations conducted by this government, the Deputy Premier gave a story unrelated to that question.

New Democrats have asked for the Premier's deputy chief of staff, Pat Sorbara, and for Gerry Loughheed, who

is on the police services board for Sudbury, to step down until this investigation is completed—a very reasonable request. They both claimed they were acting on behalf of the Premier.

Is the Premier suggesting that she had no conversations with Sorbara or Lougheed about Andrew Olivier and the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Premier has addressed this issue, so let's learn a little bit more about the person the people of Sudbury have elected to represent them here.

Throughout his career, Glenn has shown an unwavering commitment to a better, fairer Sudbury. He has fought tirelessly for supports for persons with developmental disabilities and for quality services for families struggling with autism. As a director with the United Way, he led many successful campaigns in support of community development, and as a proud volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters and minor hockey and football leagues, he has helped empower Sudbury youth to achieve their full potential.

Glenn remains focused on building opportunity and prosperity for all members of the great community of Sudbury. Whether advocating for greater retirement security, enhanced consumer protection measures or significant investments in the Ring of Fire, Glenn has put Sudbury and Sudburians front and centre. We welcome his election.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

BIODIVERSITY

Mr. Arthur Potts: My question is for the very enthusiastic Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

But before asking my question, I too want to welcome the new member from Sudbury. It's a rare occasion when the government wins back a seat on a by-election, and I want to thank you, Mr. Thibeault, and the people of Sudbury for the confidence they've shown in you and the party.

My question relates to biodiversity. Ontario's economy, its environment and its cultural identity are intimately connected with biodiversity. We are fortunate in Ontario to benefit from a great variety of species and an abundance of different plants, animals and ecosystems. Biodiversity is in many ways nature's insurance plan. That diversity provides resilience to disturbances like pests, disease, droughts, floods and forest fires. For Ontario families, and families in my riding of Beaches–East York, biodiversity plays an important role in keeping our air clean and our water safe.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry: Will the minister inform the House of what our government is currently doing to strengthen and protect biodiversity here in Ontario?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Let me add my welcome to the member from Sudbury as well. We look forward to working with him in the years ahead.

To the member from Beaches–East York: Thank you very much for the question.

Ontario has the most up-to-date biodiversity strategy in Canada, and we're the first province to update our strategy to be consistent with the targets adopted internationally by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.

This year, my ministry will be working with the Ontario Biodiversity Council on two important projects. We will be developing the State of Ontario's Biodiversity report, and in May we will be holding the Ontario Biodiversity Summit.

I've also reintroduced the Invasive Species Act, which, if passed, will make Ontario the only jurisdiction in Canada with stand-alone invasive-species legislation. It will also provide the tools necessary to prevent, detect, rapidly respond to and eradicate invasive species across the province.

My ministry is also undertaking a commitment to plant 50 million trees, including one million trees in urban areas, by 2025, and I'm pleased to report that we've already planted 16 million since 2008.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to thank the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry for his response and for his dedication to biodiversity in our province. I particularly want to commend him for championing the very important Invasive Species Act, Bill 37. We need to be able to rapidly respond to invasive species and prevent their introduction into our ecosystems. I hope that we are able to move this important bill through the House, with the co-operation of our fellows opposite.

My constituents in Beaches–East York recognize that conservation and the sustainable use of biodiversity is a shared responsibility, and it's critical that the provinces and territories and the federal government all work together to address these threats to our diverse ecosystems. It's essential that Ontario is working with colleagues in other jurisdictions to develop strategies to protect our common interests. For example, resources like the boreal forest and the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence Seaway span across various jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, again through you to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry: What are we doing in this government to engage with our counterparts in other provinces and with the federal government, and how are we advocating for Ontario's interests?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I thank the member from Beaches–East York for this question as well.

Just last week I was in Ottawa, meeting with my colleagues from across the country to discuss the conservation of wildlife and biodiversity. The discussions we had during these meetings were a significant step toward future collaboration on issues related to species at risk and invasive species.

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I was proud to lead the conversations regarding invasive species and advocate for more collaboration between our jurisdictions to address this threat. As a

result, we agreed to develop a federal-provincial-territorial task force to support future efforts to fight invasive species.

Also, last week the federal government announced Canada's 2020 biodiversity targets. I was pleased that my ministry was able to contribute to the development of these Canada-wide targets and will do our part through our biodiversity strategy and government plan to advance these goals.

Working with our partners in other provinces and states, the federal government, municipalities, stakeholders and aboriginal communities—together we will strengthen Ontario's biodiversity, grow our economy and protect our natural heritage.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just a reminder to all members that you use only the title or the riding, and we'll leave off all the explanatory notes of how great members are.

I will defer to the next question to the member from Oxford.

HOUSING SERVICES CORP.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, we've discovered a lot of questionable expenses at the Housing Services Corporation. Just after the Legislature rose for the break, we received FOI documents that show that your provincial appointment received \$72,000 a year in affordable housing money paid to his personal consulting firm, and a \$262,000 payout to the former CEO that you told the media you weren't even aware of.

You claim that HSC has reported to you, but either you haven't read the report or you missed some of the facts. We've been asking you for that report since December and still don't have it.

So Minister, if you actually read the report, what are the problems that are still in there?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the honourable member's concerns. They're concerns that I share. I also appreciate the fact that it was our government that put accountability and transparency regulations in place—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Start the clock.

Minister.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —that were missed by the previous government when they set up this corporation. Those enabled us to spot some red flags.

I wrote to the corporation and said it wasn't good enough. They have now agreed to abide by cabinet spending guidelines. The board member who was referenced is no longer a board member, and the HSC has requested of us, voluntarily, that we do a third-party independent audit of their operation and all their subsidiaries—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Minister, when the waiting lists for affordable housing have increased by almost 40,000 since you were elected, we can't afford money being siphoned off out of the affordable housing envelope.

If you received a report four months ago that contained all these questionable expenses and contracts, why didn't you act then? You claimed there is a review, but you haven't even issued a request for proposals to find someone to conduct that review.

Will you stop burying the facts and ask the provincial auditor to look at the Housing Services Corporation today?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I think the honourable member is pulling an alarm on a fire he and his government set. I'm not sure whether his lament is that his party didn't put the mechanisms in—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Finish, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm not sure his lament is that we actually did put those provisions in place, and I'm not sure that his worry is that we, having discovered some problems, are about the process of correcting those.

The best political advice I ever got was from the late great Sterling Hunt, who said, "Tell the folk what's broke and how you're going to fix it." That's exactly what we're doing with the HSC.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Start the clock, please. New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Premier. Ontarians take the OPP seriously. We take Elections Ontario very seriously. And when they are both investigating bribery allegations that come straight out of the Premier's office, we take those extremely seriously. Why isn't the Premier of this province taking those allegations and those investigations seriously?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I am, and we are, taking them seriously. I've already said many times that I have had a meeting with Elections Ontario. I have talked to Elections Ontario about what went on and I have said exactly what I said in this House, that I had made a decision to appoint a candidate, that we were working to keep the past candidate involved. I take the processes and the investigations very seriously. We will fully co-operate with them, as we have done up to this point.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Premier, police investigations and Elections Ontario investigations obviously are serious matters. They compromise the confidence and the integrity of this government. Leadership means stepping up. It means taking responsibility and taking this investigation seriously, and finding those people who were responsible and holding them accountable. But all the

Premier has said is that she wouldn't do anything differently. Why isn't the Premier showing the needed leadership on this issue?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I just want to go back to that part of the statement that I've made in this House a number of times now, where I said—and I will say again—that I believe it is the responsibility of the leader of a political party to work to keep people involved, even when there are difficult passages.

I don't know if the member opposite has ever been through a nomination process or has ever lost an election, but I have, and I can tell you that you want to stay involved and you want to know that the party wants to keep you involved. Because it's not a good feeling when you lose an election. It's not a good feeling when the leader appoints a candidate. I understand that. That's the decision I made: to appoint a candidate. I knew that that was going to be difficult for the past candidate and so we wanted to keep him involved.

I hope that the leader of the Conservatives and the leader of the NDP would do the same, that they would work to keep those candidates in Sudbury involved, Mr. Speaker. I hope they—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Mike Colle: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, last month you announced that there would be significant changes to protect marine mammals held in captivity in Ontario, like whales, dolphins and walrus. The care and protection of marine mammals in captivity is an issue that many Ontarians feel strongly about, and that our government committed to reviewing using the best available science. Minister, your announcement included a plan to bring forward new legislation related to prohibiting any new orca whales and to regulate a higher standard of care for our marine animals.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister provide further details to the House on the forthcoming policy changes and explain what steps you're going to take to stop the abuse of marine animals in captivity in our province?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member from Eglinton—Lawrence for the question. Speaker, our government is moving to enact higher standards of care for marine mammals in captivity. We will also be bringing forward legislation that will prohibit the future acquisition and breeding of orcas in Ontario. Stronger protections for marine mammals in captivity are all about making sure that these unique animals receive the best possible treatment and habitat appropriate to their specialized needs. This is something that Ontarians expect and that these animals deserve.

The new standards will be based on the findings and recommendations in a report we commissioned by marine mammals expert Dr. David Rosen of the UBC

Marine Mammal Research Unit. His report, Speaker, emphasized the need for specific standards of care for marine mammals and outlined the areas that those standards should cover. The report is fairly detailed and provides recommendations to the government as to what those standards of care should be. In the supplementary, I look forward to elaborating on those standards.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Mike Colle: Many people in Ontario are pleased to know that the government will be bringing forward legislation to prohibit the acquisition of orca whales and will be implementing higher standards for the care of all marine mammals. This is an important step toward ensuring the well-being of these magnificent creatures.

Minister, you have announced that you will be introducing higher standards of care for marine mammals in captivity, but Ontarians need to understand what areas these standards will cover and how they will be developed. Additionally, while introducing new standards is an important part of ensuring the protection of these unique animals, Ontarians need to be assured that the new rules will be effective and that they will work.

Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister please tell the House how the enhanced standards and protections will be developed and ultimately enforced?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member again. I'm very proud that our province has the strongest animal protection rules in Canada. Based on the scientific foundation presented by Dr. Rosen, we will be developing new standards of care in such areas as light, sound, water quality, enclosure size and more. This work will be informed by a technical advisory group of experts from the scientific enforcement industry and advocacy communities to get advice on the final standards.

Having specific standards of care for marine mammals will help enforcement officials at the OSPCA to ensure that these unique animals are receiving the appropriate care and conditions for their well-being. I have every confidence in the OSPCA to do that. In fact, I'm proud that our government has increased funding for the OSPCA from \$500,000 to \$5.5 million annually to support them in the important work they do.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Earlier today, the member from Nipissing, in a question to the Premier—and I want to point that at no time was an accusation of any kind levelled against a member of this House. We understand we enjoy protection from that as colleagues. But the word, if I'm allowed to use it during a point of order—my colleague used the word “lied” in referring to a possible accusation against, allegations against, members of the staff of the Premier's office. Speaker, you ruled that that word must be withdrawn.

My concern is that staff do not enjoy the same privilege that members do. If you extend that privilege to staff, then how can you not extend it to the entire citizenry that we represent, whether they be accused of criminal offences, whether they be accused of terrorism or whatever? If we cannot use that word when speaking about someone who is not a member of this assembly, then I think you are handcuffing us in a way that, in my opinion, would be wrong.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for his point of order, and indeed I accept it as a point of order. It is in line.

Members will know that there's no exhaustive list of words and phrases that are unparliamentary. A comment that is ruled out of order on one occasion may indeed be accepted on another. The decision depends on the context, the tone, and whether or not the comment has caused general disorder.

However, to his specific point, the member is correct. Any attempt to infer directly or indirectly that any honourable member of this House were lied to is always out of order. However, this does not mean that any other use of the term is always in order. As I said, it depends on the context, the tone, and also the reaction. The Speaker has an obligation to preserve order and decorum in the House, and guiding members towards the use of temperate language is one way to do that.

I appreciate any assistance that any member can provide me on that. In this regard, we ask that they engage in a respectful discourse, and I will continue to listen carefully. I accept what the member has indicated to me and I will do my best to ensure that the order of the House is maintained, with the assistance of all members.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Speaker: I just wondered, could you update this House on the progress of the Speaker's advisory committee on security?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll give the member a very short answer: The answer is no. However, with clarification, we will be meeting with that task force one more time, and I don't want to inject any comment until the final meetings have taken place.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MEMBER FOR NEPEAN–CARLETON

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is with a great degree of humility that I address the assembly here on our first day back. It's also the first day back since I ended my leadership bid for the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party. As a result, I wanted to say thank you to a number of people across the province who have enriched my life and who

have given me an amazing experience and who I wish to say thank you to.

I had a group called #moms4lisa across the province who agree with my stand on choice in child care, and I want to say thank you to Tracy Skelton of Oakville for doing that.

I travelled from Windsor all the way to Cornwall on the 401. I got to go to Sudbury and Thunder Bay and all points in between. For any member of the assembly to have that opportunity is so incredible, to see this great province.

I have a profound appreciation for every member of this assembly, and I want them to know that. I have profound appreciation for the Progressive Conservative Party, its members and the remaining leadership candidates.

I received advice from time to time in this leadership bid from many unlikely faces, many from my own party but also from the NDP House leader, the finance minister and even my former nemesis, Dalton McGuinty.

Ladies and gentlemen of this assembly, I want to say to you today how proud I am, as a member, to be standing here in this assembly for the fourth time in my career. I look forward to completing this mandate and running again in 2018.

Speaker, through you to all members of this assembly, particularly to my own caucus and to members of the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, I would like to say thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

ATTAWAPISKAT HOSPITAL

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm so glad you're staying. Come and give me a hug.

I want to bring to the attention of this House the situation with the hospital in Attawapiskat and to say that, as you know, just before the new year, there was a diesel spill in a brand new fuel-handling system they'd installed at the hospital in order to not have these types of things happen again. Well, the impossible happened and this thing spilled and, unfortunately, it contaminated the crawl space underneath the hospital in Attawapiskat.

Just so that people know, the hospital is fairly new. It's only about 20 years old, and it's a pretty darned good facility, considering where it's at.

The community in Weeneebayko has been working really hard, and the staff have been working extremely hard in order to try to make a good thing out of a bad, to keep on providing health services in Attawapiskat at a time when they don't have a home and are having to intrude on other organizations within the community. I've got to tell you, the community and the chief and council have been very supportive of trying to make this work as best they can. Staff have been working flat out.

We're working on a plan to be able to clean that facility, the crawl space underneath it. I'd like to report to the House that I had a discussion with the minister earlier. He seems more than willing to find a way for-

ward, to deal with some of the bureaucratic stuff that we've got to get out of the way in order to allow money to flow so that we can actually start getting the materials in place during this particular winter season, because if you miss the window, you've got to wait until next year, and that means we would be out of a hospital in Attawapiskat for another 12 months.

I just wanted to report to the House that there is some progress being made. Weeneebayko, the community and the staff are all working hard at making that happen. I look forward to continuing to work with the Minister of Health, because it looks as if we have some movement in that direction.

GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY SERVICES FAIR

Mr. Yvan Baker: This Saturday, my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Peter Milczyn, and I are going to be hosting the 2015 government and community services fair at Cloverdale Mall in Etobicoke. This fair is an annual event, and it offers constituents of our ridings and those from communities across the region a chance to learn more about the services offered both by the provincial government and also by non-profit and for-profit agencies that do good in our respective communities.

These organizations offer many services, services that are not always well known to Ontarians and therefore sometimes underutilized by those who are most in need. I think we can all think of instances where we've helped constituents in our respective communities to find local organizations or elements of the provincial government that can actually serve their specific needs. Bringing the fair to the people of Etobicoke each year helps us to raise awareness about the services offered in our communities and connects our citizens with important resources created specifically for them.

I'm really proud of this event because it attracts over 110 exhibitors from the provincial government, from agencies and from community organizations. What the fair also does is it allows constituents to engage one-on-one with officials, staff and volunteers on issues that impact them. They can get their questions answered, in many cases, on the spot, and this in-person connection helps to bridge the divide between service providers and those relying on those services.

Every year, the fair attracts around 3,000 people, who continue to drop by every year. The fair is going to be taking place this Saturday, February 21, from 11 to 3 p.m. at Cloverdale Mall in Etobicoke. I'd like to invite all the constituents of Etobicoke Centre to join me, and all of you in this House to invite your constituents to join us in Etobicoke, for what promises to be an important event.

CORNWALL COMMUNITY POLICE SERVICE

Mr. Jim McDonell: In mid-January, Cornwall police service received a 911 call from a senior upset about the

food she was receiving. The operator was suspicious about the circumstances and forwarded a request for Cornwall police service to investigate.

Investigating officers found a very sad situation. It turned out to be an elderly couple where the husband was trying to the best of his ability to care for his wife, who was suffering from advanced dementia. The man, too proud to ask for help and faced with increasing financial challenges, could not pay the bills and put food on the table. In fact, he had to sell his wedding ring of 54 years just to put food on the table for the two of them.

Cornwall police officers and civilian support staff went well above and beyond the call of duty that day. They quickly began canvassing amongst themselves and not only collected enough money to buy \$150 worth of groceries, but they also raised the \$130 required to purchase the ring back from the local pawnshop.

This example of generosity and community spirit from some caring residents of my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry not only made the local news, but it became news worldwide.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Cornwall police service D team and the civilian support staff who stepped in to help a very needy couple in my riding. In spite of the very difficult job that they are called upon daily to complete, they still have the dedication and compassion to go the extra mile and help a couple truly in need.

MENTAL HEALTH

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today I would like to take a moment to express my serious concern for the state of mental health care in London and the province as a whole. Over the past few weeks, I have met with experts in the field who are affected by mental health issues in the community, and they have identified that we are now facing an incontrovertible mental health care crisis in London.

Last year, my colleague Ms. Sattler and I spoke out in the Legislature regarding the backlog in our emergency rooms and mental health patients waiting for days for a hospital bed.

I hope that this government and other MPPs have seen the various news articles in the past few weeks that revealed that the psychiatric unit at Victoria Hospital in London is dangerously over capacity. In recent weeks, it has come to our community's attention that this overcrowding is causing a serious safety issue for both patients and health care workers.

That safety issue also extends to mental health patients who are living in the community.

In London, we recently suffered the tragic death of a man living in an unregulated group home that provides housing for individuals with mental health issues. These are vulnerable people living in questionable housing with few supports. People are getting hurt, and people are dying.

We need a solution, and we need it now. This government needs to take real, effective action on this issue without further delay.

KINDNESS WEEK SEMAINE DE LA BONTÉ

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, as you know, the third week in February is Kindness Week in Ontario. We could tell this morning in question period that everyone was aware of that.

I'd like to recognize Ottawa's Kindness Week today. The city-wide initiative encourages community members to choose to be kind and recognizes everyday acts of kindness. Kind Ottawa has become a vibrant movement in our community. Under the leadership of Kindness Week chair Rabbi Reuven Bulka, community leaders and volunteers from across Ottawa employ their resources, experience and enthusiasm to bring Kindness Week to life in Ottawa. Rabbi Bulka was also instrumental in the unanimous passing of Kindness Week in Ontario in this Legislature in 2008.

1510

I'd like to thank my colleagues Mr. Naqvi, MPP Jones and MPP Gélinas for handing out cookies this morning. I'd like to thank Jackie Choquette from the House leader's office, who was kind enough to bake the cookies on the weekend.

Et cette semaine, je vous encourage de participer et de faire des actes de bonté pour vos amis, votre famille et vos collègues, et de prendre le temps de remarquer ceux des autres.

Kindness Week reminds us that we all have the opportunity to create the kind of community that we want to live in. I would like to encourage everybody to look for opportunities to be kind to other people and to take that opportunity this week. It's very important to do.

TENDERING PROCESS

Mr. Michael Harris: Today's Ministry of Labour announcement launching public consultations that focus on the Ontario Labour Relations Act provides government an opportunity to finally close a legislative loophole that allows labour monopolies to command local infrastructure tendering.

As the review announcement highlights "globalization and trade liberalization" as two workplace trends to be examined, we must ensure that examination results in fairness for local contractors to bid on publicly funded infrastructure projects in their own communities.

Given that the review is designed to support government's four-part economic plan to build new public infrastructure, I feel it's incumbent on government to ensure these projects are being tendered fairly. Taxpayers expect their infrastructure to be built with the highest-quality work at the lowest possible cost.

Much as we predicted, the impacts of closed tendering in my own community of the region of Waterloo and around the province are limiting competition while driving up the price for local infrastructure. Tendering restrictions across Ontario are wasting up to \$283 million annually.

Despite the widespread support I received for my Fair and Open Tendering Act, my aim to close this legislative loophole has yet to be realized. And while I look forward to round two, today I am hand-delivering a letter to the Minister of Labour to (1) invite him down to the region of Waterloo; (2) consult with local contractors and their workers; and (3) use that opportunity to restore fairness, open competition and sustainability to our public tendering process.

INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

Mr. Arthur Potts: On February 21, in the great multicultural riding of Beaches—East York, I will be participating, in an enthusiastic way, in a ceremony celebrating International Mother Language Day.

The day was first recognized by UNESCO in 1999 and began as an annual observance in February 2000 in Dhaka, the Bangladeshi capital.

In 2009, this House unanimously passed a motion introduced by my colleague from the riding of Richmond Hill recognizing International Mother Language Day.

The origins of it trace back to February 21, 1952, when students from different schools gathered in Dhaka, in what was then East Pakistan, to rally in recognition of their mother language, Bangla. At that time, the government did not provide the opportunity for Bangla-language students to be educated in their mother tongue. The demonstration turned violent, and students were shot dead during the protest. So every year, February 21 is observed to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism, in honour of that tragedy.

Beaches—East York is home to one of the largest concentrations of residents from Bangladesh in this country. On Saturday, we will gather to recognize International Mother Language Day, and I will wear my red panjabi.

I recently met with Messrs. Rizwan Raham and Azim Dewan, who have launched a non-profit organization to erect an International Mother Language Day monument in the riding of Beaches—East York. They will reveal a new design in early March.

Please join me in recognizing this important day, and join us on Friday and Saturday for your own celebrations in your own ridings celebrating International Mother Language Day.

KALEY'S ACRES

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's my pleasure to welcome again Adrian and Draupadi Quinn from Kaley's Acres and their

guests from Brandneu Foods, from my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West. The Quinns were here in late November, when they received the 2014 Premier's Award for Agri-Food Innovation Excellence for Kaley's Acres.

In 2009, they converted 10 acres of former tobacco fields into kale production, and then transformed these leaves into delicious snacks.

These days, more and more nutrition-conscious consumers are reaching for healthy snacks. That's exactly why Kaley's Acres were recognized with the Premier's award for innovation. They are producing kale in the form of chips, and they are delicious, Speaker.

I'm proud to have folks in my riding such as Draupadi and Adrian Quinn, with creative new ideas to help to keep our agricultural sector thriving and to create jobs along the way. We're excited to have them back visiting us, and we're really excited that they brought bags of kale chips to all members of this House.

Again, congratulations on a well-deserved, prestigious award, and welcome again to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Madame Lalonde assumes ballot item number 34 and Ms. Wong assumes ballot item number 37.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also beg to inform the House that, pursuant to the order of the House dated December 11, 2014, establishing the Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment, the Clerk of the House has received written notification from the House leaders of the recognized parties designating the membership of the committee as follows: Mr. Dong, Mr. Hillier, Madame Lalonde, Ms. Malhi, Mrs. McGarry, Ms. McMahon, Mr. Natyshak, Ms. Sattler; Ms. Scott, Vice-Chair; and Ms. Vernile, Chair.

TABLING OF SESSIONAL PAPERS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also beg to inform the House that during the adjournment, the following reports were tabled:

On January 6, 2015, the Election Returns with Statistics from the Records (2012, 2013, 2014 By-Elections and 2014 General Election), Volumes 1 and 2, from the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario.

On January 13, 2015, the Annual Energy Conservation Progress Report 2014, from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

Finally, on January 27, 2015, the 2013-14 annual report of the Open Meeting Law Enforcement Team (OMLET) from the Ombudsman of Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated February 17, 2015, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE POLICY COMITÉ PERMANENT DE LA JUSTICE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I beg leave to present a report on The Cancellation and Relocation of the Gas Plants and Document Retention Issues from the Standing Committee on Justice Policy and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Qaadri presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. As the long-enduring Chair of the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, I am pleased to table the committee's report today entitled The Cancellation and Relocation of the Gas Plants and Document Retention Issues.

The committee, Speaker, as you'll appreciate, undertook two studies in this report, one concerning the tendering, planning, commissioning, cancellation and relocation of the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants, and the other concerning the record-keeping practices of the Ontario government.

J'aimerais saisir l'occasion de remercier les membres du comité pour leur contribution. J'aimerais aussi remercier le personnel législatif, la greffière du comité, Tamara Pomanski, ainsi que les recherchistes, Jeff Parker and Ian Morris.

Speaker, at this time, with your indulgence, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Qaadri moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1519 to 1549.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats?

Mr. Naqvi moves adjournment of the debate on the report by the committee—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Mr. Qaadri.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Qaadri; sorry. Mr. Qaadri. All members who—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I can't.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sounds like both of you can't.

All those voting in favour, rise at the same time to be counted by the Clerk.

Thank you. Please be seated.

All those opposed, please rise together to be counted by the Clerks.

Pray be seated.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 54; the nays are 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PROTECTING INTERNS AND CREATING A LEARNING ECONOMY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES STAGIAIRES ET LA CRÉATION D'UNE ÉCONOMIE D'APPRENTISSAGE

Ms. Sattler moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This bill, which is known as the Protecting Interns and Creating a Learning Economy Act, 2015, includes two schedules that were previously introduced as two separate private members' bills.

Schedule 1, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act, amends the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to establish the advisory council on work-integrated learning. The council's members are appointed by the minister from various groups, with the mandate to advise the minister on expanding work-integrated learning opportunities in Ontario. The mandate also includes making recommendations with respect to a website for sharing information about work-integrated learning opportunities and requires the council to report annually on Ontario's progress in this area.

Schedule 2, the Greater Protection for Interns and Vulnerable Workers Act, extends certain provisions of

the Employment Standards Act to students in secondary and post-secondary work experience programs, as well as individuals receiving training.

New requirements are imposed on employers with respect to individuals receiving training, including the requirement to provide information, to provide a day off work on a public holiday and to provide vacation without pay.

The schedule also amends the act with respect to allegations that the act has been or is being contravened so that allegations may be provided to the ministry anonymously or through a third party.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I move that notwithstanding standing order 98, the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr. Vanthof and Ms. Horwath exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr. Vanthof assumes ballot item number 27 and Ms. Horwath assumes ballot item number 35.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that Mr. Vanthof and Ms. Horwath exchange places in order—I'm sorry; a little rusty.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispense. All in favour? Approved? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

CURRICULUM

Mr. Rick Nicholls: To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in 2010, the Ontario Liberal government promised to consult with the public before implementing a revised sex education curriculum;

"Whereas since 2010, the Ontario public has not been given opportunity to provide feedback on proposed sex education changes;

"Whereas in late October, 2014, the Ontario Liberal government announced that more revisions to the sex education curriculum would be implemented in time for the next school year;

"Whereas the announced plans to consult only one hand-picked parent per school does not constitute broad

public feedback on the curriculum, and therefore, the Ontario Liberal government is breaking its 2010 promise to consult with the people of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To publicly release the updated version of the sexual education curriculum that will be taught in Ontario schools in September 2015 promptly; to allow the people of Ontario to review the updated curriculum and provide meaningful feedback to be considered by the Ontario government in the name of transparency and accountability."

I approve of this petition, will affix my name to it and give it to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further petitions?

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: This is a very important petition for the people of Iroquois Falls.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is responsible for the governance and management of forestry;

"Whereas Resolute Forest Products holds 44% of the sustainable forest licence (SFL) in the Abitibi forest;

"Whereas Resolute Forest Products have announced their intent to give up their wood rights;

"Whereas the sustainable forest licence (SFL) is a critical element in the marketability for economic development in the town of Iroquois Falls to potential business interests;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Appeal to the Ministry of Natural Resources to institute a moratorium on the transfer of the SFL for the wood rights being abandoned by Resolute Forest Products in the Abitibi River forest ... to ensure that new entrants into the marketplace are able to apply for the SFL."

I fully agree and add my signature.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas the Ontario government is committed to ensuring the safety of drivers, passengers and pedestrians on Ontario's roads and making the province North America's most cycling friendly jurisdiction; and

"Whereas, on average, one person is killed on Ontario's roads every 18 hours, and one person is injured every 8.1 minutes; and

"Whereas drivers who use cellphones while driving are four times more likely to be in a crash than non-distracted drivers; and

"Whereas the evidence has shown that Ontario's impaired driving laws need to be strengthened to apply

sanctions for driving under the influence of alcohol to those impaired by drugs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer act, 2014."

I fully support the petition and will give my petition to Rachel.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario keep the obstetrics unit open at Leamington District Memorial Hospital."

I approve of this petition, affix my name to it and give it to Julie.

1600

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was given to me by M^{me} Ginette Lefebvre, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the NDP MPP for Timiskaming—Cochrane, Mr. John Vanthof, has introduced Bill 46 in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario so that UTVs (utility task vehicles) would be treated like all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) by the Highway Traffic Act;

"Whereas this bill to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect to UTVs was introduced on November 24, 2014;

"Whereas this bill will have positive economic impact on clubs, manufacturers, dealers and rental shops and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to vote in favour of MPP Vanthof's Bill 46 to allow UTVs the same access as ATVs in the Highway Traffic Act."

I fully support this position, will affix my name to it and ask page Arlyne to bring it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further petitions?

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote

economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

Speaker, I agree with this, affix my name to it and give it to page Natalie to bring to the desk.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed here by a great number of my constituents in Oxford county, and the petitions keep coming in, in order to convince the government that they shouldn't have a landfill site in a mined-out quarry.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990...; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

Thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to read this petition on behalf of my constituents, Mr. Speaker.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's youth justice facilities are run by two completely different sets of policy guidelines depending on whether they are part of the Ontario public service (OPS) and funded directly by the provincial government, or the broader public service (BPS) and funded indirectly; and

"Whereas OPS and BPS facilities serve the very same youth, and both receive their funding from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services; and

"Whereas, unlike in similar OPS facilities, there is no provincial mandate for youth corrections community

agencies to provide WSIB coverage, meaning many agencies have inadequate private insurance coverage; and

"Whereas youth corrections community agencies are struggling with chronic underfunding;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We strongly urge the provision of a provincial mandate for all youth corrections agencies to provide WSIB coverage to their staff. We further urge the assembly to improve systemic inequities by ensuring that all youth corrections facilities receive proper funding."

I couldn't agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Andrew to bring to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further petitions? I recognize the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back to the chair.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas some establishments have instituted unfair tipping practices in which a portion of tips and gratuities are being deducted and kept by owners; and

"Whereas employees in establishments where tipping is a standard practice, such as restaurants, bars and hair salons, supplement their income with tips and gratuities and depend on those to maintain an adequate standard of living; and

"Whereas customers expect that when they leave a tip or a gratuity that the benefit will be going to the employees who directly contributed to that positive experience;

"Whereas most establishments do respect their employees and do not collect their tips and gratuities unfairly and thus are left at a disadvantage compared to those owners who use the tips and gratuities to pad their margins;

"Whereas other jurisdictions in North America such as Quebec, New Brunswick and New York City have passed legislation to protect employees' tips;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support Bill 12, the Protecting Employees' Tips Act, 2014, and help shield Ontario employees and businesses from operators with improper tipping practices while protecting accepted and standard practices such as tip pooling among employees."

I agree with this petition. I sign my name and leave it with page William.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have some 2,500 petitions in support of improved winter road maintenance. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

"Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

"Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario's highways are safe for travellers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor."

I'm pleased to support this petition.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; and

"Whereas police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; and

"Whereas this impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; and

"Whereas this legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and

"Whereas negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the Attorney General's office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause."

It's my pleasure to give this petition to Ishani and sign it as well. Thank you.

CREDIT UNIONS

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families

to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

"Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers' resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario's economy and create jobs in three ways:

"—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

"—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

"—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries."

I'm pleased to support this petition. I affix my name to it and I hand it to page Eileen.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas it has been over a decade since regulation 316/03 of the Highway Traffic Act has been updated to recognize the new classes of off-road vehicles and a motion to do so passed on November 7, 2013, with the unanimous support of the provincial Legislature;

"Whereas owners of two-up ATVs and side-by-side UTVs deserve clarity in knowing which roadways and trails they are legally permitted to use with these off-road vehicles;

"Whereas owners using off-road vehicles should be able to legally access woodlots, trails, as well as hunting and fishing destinations;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the private member's Bill 58, which seeks to update the Highway Traffic Act to include new classes of all-terrain and utility task vehicles, receive swift passage through the Legislature."

I agree with this, will sign it and send it to the table with Amber.

1610

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future

generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province's social, economic and multicultural fabric;

"We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport."

I agree with this, affix my signature and give it to page Muntder to bring forward.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (MAKING ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFER), 2015 LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE TRANSPORT (ACCROÎTRE LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE EN ONTARIO)

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 8, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2012 sur l'autoroute 407 Est et le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions et apportant une modification corrélatrice à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): When we last debated Bill 31, the member for Hamilton Mountain had nine minutes and 14 seconds remaining. To the member.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm happy to have the opportunity to have some more time to speak on this very important matter before it's time-allocated like everything else has been time-allocated in the last session. I'm hoping that we're not going to see that again going forward.

What I did talk about, Speaker, was—

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: Let me just give some background on where I was. This bill offers some great solutions that I am happy to support, but it's not perfect by any stretch of the imagination. I hope that we can see some amendments when it goes to committee. The bill revisits the issues brought forward in the previous Parliament in Bill 34, the Highway Traffic Statute Law Amendment Act, in relation to the collection of fines by municipalities, and also Bill 173, an amendment to the same act in relation to keeping Ontario roads safe. It also introduces some new measures to address drugged driving, as well as some changes to the Highway 407 East Act.

I had talked about some statistics from the CAA. I think I'll say those once again, because they speak a

thousand words when it comes to distracted driving. It says drivers engaged in text messaging on a cellphone are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash or a near-crash event, compared with non-distracted drivers. Eighty per cent of collisions and 65% of near-crashes have some form of driver inattention as a contributing factor. Distracted drivers are three times more likely to be in a crash rather than attentive drivers. International research shows that 20% to 30% of all collisions involve a distracted driver.

In March of this year, the OPP reported that distracted driving was the number one killer on our roads patrolled by the OPP, and there were 78 people killed as a result of distracted driving-related crashes in 2013.

Those numbers are absolutely astounding, Speaker. I think that we really need to be looking at ways that we can be talking to people, that we can be educating our young people, having signs on the highways talking about how distracted driving kills. Here we are talking about reading signs on the highway, but we have to do something to bump it up.

I think the fines are going to be raised considerably, which is necessary because distracted driving is killing people. We see it every day. I drive back and forth from Hamilton to Toronto. I take road trips through the province. I'm constantly seeing people reading and texting on their BlackBerrys like nothing is being enforced. It's something that needs to be talked about.

I was also speaking, the last time I had a chance to speak to this debate, about tinted windows and how I had sent a letter to the minister regarding this. Actually, the same day I sent the letter was the day that he tabled this bill. Unfortunately, I haven't received a response back from the minister regarding that, and I would really love to know his comments and his thoughts on that, because I think that if we have people who are texting and we have dark, tinted windows, the police officers can't see through those windows. I think it's absolutely critical that police are enforcing the rules that they have in place. Some jurisdictions in Canada have laws that either make tinting of vehicle windows illegal or limit the extent of the tinting. In Ontario, however, the hazard to driving is left to the discretion of the police officer at the scene, with no specific limits set in law. If an officer believes a particular tinted window obstructs a driver's view or obscures the view into a vehicle, they can write a ticket for the offence.

So I was hoping that I was going to beat the minister to tabling that bill in saying, "This is maybe something that you should be looking at coming through this legislation," but, like I said, he tabled it the same day. I'm hopeful that he will make amendments. I would love to see a response to my letter that I sent him a couple of months back to reflect his thoughts on that.

The bill also extends existing provisions for drunk driving so that charges can be laid for drugged drivers. While it's important to address the problem of people driving under the influence of drugs, it has proven difficult to serve convictions using the field physical co-

ordination tests that are proposed in this bill. Mothers Against Drunk Driving has reported that only 1.9% of total impaired driving charges laid in Canada in 2012 were for drug impairment. They have called for the development of a road test, similar to a Breathalyzer, to identify drugged drivers. I understand that the government is looking into the technology that might be available for such a test, and I encourage them to follow through on that work.

I have some concerns with the plans, through this bill, to outsource the vehicle inspection centre system to a private operator. Firstly, the actual model is largely unspecified in this bill, but it has been determined that it will involve a private delegated administrative authority with a relationship to the government similar to that of Taron for new homeowners or the Technical Standards and Safety Authority.

The bill specifies that the administrator of this new vehicle inspection centre system is not an agent of the crown. As such, our vehicle inspection operators would not be subject to the oversight that government bodies would normally encounter, such as by the Ombudsman or the Auditor General. We've seen the track record when it comes to accountability and oversight with this government. Many members on this side of the House have been calling for Ombudsman oversight. They're starting to inch away at some of those things, but on other things they fell flat—by creating a single person for the hospital oversight and not having the Ombudsman doing that, which is going to be at the responsibility of the government. We're still not getting the proper oversight.

I was calling for Ombudsman oversight for the children's aid society. They gave it to the child advocate for some parts, but there are still so many parts of that system that are in dire need of some true oversight mechanisms. I know that the minister is looking at me on this, and I'm hoping that we can work together to make sure we do have a true oversight of our children's aid societies.

So, like I said, this government are shouting from the rooftops that they are accountable and they are transparent, but they always seem to do the opposite. They talk one thing and they do the complete opposite. It's usually the bill with the really great name that they can spout about and say how wonderful they are by bringing out this bill, and yet it really is just barely scratching the surface of the need that Ontarians are telling us about every single day.

One of the other concerns—the 407 and the invoices is a major problem. They can just absolutely suspend your licence—like, jeez. And what is it: 25%? They get a 25% annual return on their investment for the 407. That was quite the gem that the Conservatives gave over on that one.

1620

One of the other subjects that I wanted to talk about was drivers who have lost their licence due to medical concerns. The drivers that I speak to understand it. They get it. They don't want to be behind the wheel when

they're not safe and healthy to be so, but once they are told they're safe and healthy by their doctor, it takes two months for them to get their licence back because of the system and the process it has to go through.

I know that every single member in this House, including the Liberals on the other side, have heard these same complaints. There's no way that this is only happening to the people in Hamilton Mountain and people in Niagara. It's happening everywhere. It's something that really needs to be addressed by this government. We need to try to crunch that down. Once we have a doctor's note, that should be it. People should be allowed to drive again. It shouldn't take six to eight weeks to have that turned around and people be able to get their licence back because, quite frankly, some people, if they can't drive, they can't work. An employer isn't always going to be so graceful with their time.

Thank you, Speaker. I've enjoyed this debate and look forward to the next one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments? The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: And women's issues, too, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): And women's issues, too.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you.

I'm happy to speak for a couple of minutes on Bill 31.

For the last 13 years, Ontario has been ranked either first or second in North America for road safety, and we're proud of that record. However, we know there's always more we can do. Keeping our roads safe is a very high priority for our government. This bill, Bill 31, not only serves to protect drivers on our roads, but it introduces a number of provisions that will help keep pedestrians and cyclists safe in Ontario.

This is very timely for me because one of my twins just got his driver's licence in the last couple of months and the other one's going for her licence this Friday. So I'm very interested in the improvements that I think this bill will help address.

Some of the stats, Speaker, are quite compelling. Over 45% of drivers killed in Ontario were found to have drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol in their system. Drinking and driving fatalities represent nearly one quarter of all fatalities. That's from 2011. From 2008 to 2012, an average of 14 convicted alcohol-impaired drivers were repeat offenders. If these and other trends continue, we're going to be very concerned about what's going on on our roads in Ontario. We know that in 2011 pedestrians constituted one in five motor-vehicle-related fatalities.

There's a lot of support for this bill, Speaker. I know that the Minister of Transportation has consulted heavily on this bill with key stakeholders. I have a very long list; I won't have time to go through it all. I think it's a very important bill that we can all get behind and I look forward to its speedy passage in the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I had the pleasure of catching the end of my colleague's speech. I thought it was well done. It covered some of the key issues that we see in terms of safety on our roads.

I think that distracted driving is certainly, as our honourable member points out, something that's a serious issue, particularly when it comes to our youth. They are not aware of some of the connections between distracted driving and rates and incidences of accidents and collisions. It's something where perhaps with more education, more awareness would work towards discouraging some of that distracted driving and making our roads safer.

My colleague from Hamilton Mountain also brought up a very important part about some of our concerns around accountability or, more specifically, the lack of accountability when it comes to this government. The fact is that they had a great opportunity to address one of the huge oversights when it comes to accountability in our health sector, which was the fact that the Ombudsman doesn't have oversight over the health sector. They could have addressed that by increasing or broadening the mandate. Instead, what they created was a brand new, separate, independent ombudsman who doesn't have the scope, doesn't have the same powers, doesn't have the same ability to enact change, doesn't have the same oversight mechanisms that the Ombudsman does have. Instead, it created another, separate organization or a separate form of oversight which is not as effective, which doesn't have the same level of protection and accountability for the people of Ontario, and they've dropped the ball. Our concern when it comes to this government implementing accountability and oversight mechanisms is that they've consistently shown that they're not able to do it.

One other key issue that was brought up is the outsourcing of those licensing centres. We've seen great signs of trouble because of those centres, and we need to address that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions?

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Welcome back to 2015. I'm very pleased to stand here today to support Bill 31. As you heard earlier today, I brought in some petitions from my riding of Scarborough—Agin-court supporting Bill 31. Just today, so that every member of the House knows, Toronto police are actually dealing with this particular issue of distracted drivers and the issue that distracted drivers kill. It is very important that we have legislation in this Legislature to support our local law enforcement.

I'm very, very pleased to be here to support the bill, but I wanted to draw on the member opposite from Hamilton Mountain about this bill, particularly the issue about demerit points. No one in this House could contest the fact that people have been charged but their demerit points have not been affected by either drinking and driving or running a red light. Just to give you an example, Mr. Speaker, just yesterday I lost a resident in my

riding from running a red light. He might be getting charged by the Toronto police—that's a police matter. But the fact that one of my frail seniors just passed away yesterday because of running a red light—we know the consequences of running red lights.

But more importantly, we now have proposed legislation that, if passed, will then toughen the penalty. No one in this House can contest the fact that improving demerit points, increasing the fines and also allowing municipalities—because we often hear when we go back to our constituencies that the municipalities have to collect the fines, but they don't get to participate to get the fine. If the law, Bill 31, is passed, municipalities will have an opportunity to collect defaulted and appealed fines. That's a good thing.

I encourage everybody in this House to move this bill forward to go to committee so we can have further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Back to the—

Interjection: No, no. One more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Oh, there is one more? I'm sorry; forgive me. Okay. I recognize the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you for recognizing me after the long break. I want to thank the member for her comments on Bill 31—she's always very passionate and wonderful to listen to—and the member opposite who mentioned that this could be a revenue tool for the municipalities. I think we're all for that, because the municipalities have a lot of responsibility in the province, and they need those revenue tools.

Just this morning, as I was coming down to Queen's Park, I heard that the police were doing a bit of a blitz to raise awareness, as well as watching if people were driving distracted. There was a gentleman who came on who had been stopped by the police in a hearse. I guess that's to send a message, and I think he felt that it was a strong message to him. He was driving down University while texting, and we all know that it just takes a split second.

I always used to say to my kids when I was running carpool that it just takes a moment that you distract me and we could all be hurt. I think it's something that we all have to be more cognizant of, and we all have to focus on not just the fact that people are texting and driving. I think that there are movies being played in cars, which can be very distracting for the driver. We all see the YouTube videos—I hope the cars aren't actually moving—where people are performing; Frozen was a popular one this year. We saw the mothers and daughters—and fathers and daughters—singing along. It was hard sometimes to tell if the cars were moving or not, but I have a feeling that, oftentimes as not, those cars were moving, and maybe there was somebody in the passenger seat filming it.

I think that the real crux of the matter is that we're all spending way too much time in our cars. In this cold weather, it's a little bit difficult to take public transit, so I

think that we're seeing that people are going to be car-dependent. This is the great white north, and as long as there's traffic we're going to be spending that extra time in cars, so we've got to address traffic as well.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Hamilton Mountain for her final response.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you to the Minister of Children and Youth Services and for women's issues; to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton; the member from Scarborough-Incourt; and the member from Thornhill.

I was really hoping to hear from the Minister of Children and Youth Services about oversight, because when I was talking about oversight she was giving me the nod, like, "Yes, yes, yes, I've got something right here." But when she stood up, she talked about her children, who are getting their licence—and congratulations to them; that's a wonderful time. But I know she must be hoping that there will be stricter fines, that there will be something in this legislation to make a difference.

Let me just make this quick point: The fine could be up to \$500 for not having a proper light on your bicycle. Yet a minimum fine for distracted driving is \$300. We have to really enforce this. We have to make it strong and we have to make it real so that people get it: that distracted driving kills people. A light on your bicycle is a major problem for drivers, but the fines just don't make sense.

We'd love to see some amendments to this bill. We need to talk about the MTO; we need to talk about medical reviews and changes to them. I'd love to see something in there about tinted windows. We just really need to get cracking down on this issue of distracted drivers, of people on their BlackBerrys while they're driving. I think that's probably the key to this entire bill, to making sure that we get it right and making sure that we scare enough people by the fines that will be imposed—that they're not going to want to pick up their phone, and if they do, they're going to be paying for it.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to have had the opportunity to speak to this very important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker; thank you for the time. I'm going to be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore. We share some interest in municipal politics and urban public policy. We share a passion for it, so I'm thrilled to be sharing my time with him.

I also want to recognize the comments by the member for Hamilton Mountain. I very strongly agree with what she said, particularly on the issue of tinted windows.

This bill, which struggled for passage in the last sitting of this House, is really a work in progress. The government passed several parallel pieces of legislation—sorry; policy frameworks that support this legislation. One of

them is Cycle Ontario. We put out the one-year action plan, which has to be finished by July of this year.

Many of the commitments the government made in that one-year action plan are things like the one-metre rule, things like the higher fines that the member from Hamilton Mountain mentioned. This raises our fines to about the highest in the country, and treats "dooring" as collisions. As someone who cycles 12 months a year and doesn't own a car, I can tell you I spend most of my time white-knuckled on the streets, looking constantly at people's doors to see who is going to open them and not look. It's sadly often a one-way view. It saddens me that people open their doors not recognizing that there's often a cyclist to their immediate left. Those injuries are terrible and push people into oncoming cars, and we know it's a significant cause of fatalities.

I've said many times in this place that through most of its history, the Parliament at Queen's Park has always been a much less partisan place than it has been today. I've tried very hard as a minister and a member here to try and ensure that it isn't always a government-opposition dynamic.

This bill was one of my first bills. It's not mine now; it obviously belongs to my very capable friend from Vaughan, the Minister of Transportation. But this is the House at its best. The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka has his fingerprints on this, in the commitments that we're making today, between all parties here, to ensure that we have proper shoulders for cyclists, but also just to make our roads safer. Any of us who have lived in the northern parts of this country, above the 49th parallel, know how important that is for cyclists and for others.

The member for Simcoe North has his fingerprints on this, on the protection of towing and emergency-vehicle drivers; very, very good work.

The member for Parkdale-High Park was the original author of the one-metre rule in this House. She introduced it first and she has seen that embedded in this bill—as well as my friend from Scarborough-Rouge River, who has campaigned long and hard for distracted driving legislation, and this puts us ahead.

I always think, when you've had a minority government, if all parties in that situation learn the lessons of collaboration and being parliamentarians and Ontarians before we embrace a partisan stripe, we can get a lot more done. I wish this bill had happened—and I know there were members on both sides of the House who fought with some of the more partisan elements in each of their parties to get this done, but we weren't successful. This bill itself now, I think, is that. I hope that we can do more of this kind of stuff.

As I've said, it was interesting. In Norway, in New Zealand, and now just recently, last week, in the United Kingdom, those countries' party leaders signed agreements that they would not make climate change a partisan issue. In their national legislatures, they recognized some issues as being so overwhelmingly critical to our survival as a species that they have set those things aside, and there's a great spirit in this. So I appreciate many of

the comments that have been made that have been positive, and I think this bill has been, in many ways, the Legislature at its very, very best.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you, I have never lived in a place where I have felt so unsafe on my bicycle. About 25%, one in four Ontarians, could probably cycle to work, if you look at the percentage of commutes that are less than five kilometres. I walked today, but I most often bicycle. I think the perception that the member for Thornhill raised was one that I don't agree with. She said, well, we live in the north, and public transit is too cold; therefore, we all have to drive cars. Well, we're massively investing in Viva bus service north. York region is one of the leaders in reforming land use. My friend from Newmarket–Aurora was one of the authors of many of those policies in his municipal career. We're now building walkable neighbourhoods. I don't understand how it's too cold to use public transit. I really don't understand that. I haven't used public transit because I'm outside. I get people who look at me and say, "You rode your bike this weekend in 40 below?" Yes, I was out for half as much time. I mean, if you think about most of my friends who had to shovel, they spent more time trying to get their car started and out of their driveway. I was already to where I had to go by the time you got there.

We're not a generation of wusses. I came from good Ukrainian stock. People were dumped off at the end of an incomplete railroad in the middle of bald prairie, and somehow we survived, and today we're afraid to take public transit. I walked down Bay Street the other day, 10 blocks. Do you know how many cars I saw with more than one passenger in them out of several hundred cars? Three. You want to understand: Our fastest area of greenhouse gas emissions is because of the kinds of attitudes expressed by my friend from Thornhill, that you have to have the one person in a car, burning up gasoline like it's going out of style. If you're going to drive a car that much, get an electric vehicle. Every major auto manufacturer makes an electric vehicle. You can go 120 kilometres easily today, and the average commute is something less than 40. Very few people commute over 50.

If you care about your kids—I've said one thing, Mr. Speaker, that it should be a requirement and a law in this Legislature, to sit here, that you do one thing: You have to Google "four degrees mean temperature change." You should all do that, and I'll say it to my friends in the Conservative Party who seem to have some trouble believing climate change is actually happening. It will scare the bejesus out of you. If it doesn't motivate you to come in here and understand why people like President Obama, a fairly liberal Democrat, and someone like David Cameron, a fairly conservative Conservative from the UK, have identified this as their countries' number one priority—because what this four degrees Celsius means is that the drought that we've been experiencing in California for the last three years, which is pushing up our grocery prices, making food less affordable for

working families and poor families of Ontario, is about to become a nightmare. NASA—one of the most conservative science organizations in the world, the people who send people to the moon and Mars and off to the rings of Jupiter—have just come out with a study last week that said the droughts in California will likely go on between 20 and 40 years. If you actually realize that about 40, 50, 60 years out, somewhere in that range, we'll be at four degrees Celsius, those droughts are permanent. That's one third of North Americans' food supply.

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How are you going to feed your children and your grandchildren if we don't turn this around?

I love the uninformed views about the investments we're making in public transportation in this bill and making our roads safe for people to walk and cycle and skateboard and get on to streetcars and buses. Why is that so important? Because the consequences of four degrees Celsius are horrific.

It's the loss of most of our reefs. I went out at age 57 and learned how to scuba dive. Why? Because I look fabulous in a spandex scuba suit? I would love to tell you that was the case. But I do not look fabulous. I look like a sack of potatoes. I couldn't even get a good look from a clown fish. It was a very humbling experience being down there at 18 metres.

I'll tell you, when you see a living reef and you see a dead reef, you realize that 60% of our ocean aquatic life—everything from micro-organisms to big sharks and whales—depends on those reefs, and 25% of them are dead. A one-degree Celsius change in temperature is wiping out our reefs—one degree.

I'm a grandfather, and I've got a son. Why do I ride my bike to work every day? For my grandson, because I want my grandson to be a crotchety old man like me one day. He has the full right to be an old geezer one day. I want him to live that long.

Right now, at four degrees Celsius—if you haven't done it, Google "four degrees Celsius."

Ocean acidification: Do you know that in our Great Lakes right now, the plankton are dying? The crustaceans, daphnia, our little microcrustaceans, the micro-organisms that support all of the freshwater fish—that's the base of the food chain—cannot form shells now because, already in 2014, the levels of acidification are there.

This is as much a climate change bill as it is a road user safety bill—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member for Thornhill on a point of order.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I was wondering if maybe we changed bills because we seem to be straying off topic. That's all; thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I remind the minister to stick to the bill that's before us.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'll take that from the member for Thornhill as, she'll go home and Google "four degrees Celsius," so she can understand why I disagreed

with her when I said that we're not going to get people out of cars.

If you have kids, and I know you do, and you care about intergenerational equity, as I know you do—believe me, this is one of the most important pieces of climate change because it's the thing that you and I must do together. I mean this very sincerely and in a non-partisan way.

I grew up in the suburbs in Beaconsfield, out on the West Island, as part of the great anglophone diaspora that came to Ontario. My parents drove a car everywhere. My dad had a new Taurus every three years. I hated that car. If you're a gay kid trying to go out to the bars, it is the uncoolest car ever. You cannot pick up anyone in Montreal if you're an anglophone in a Taurus. I'm sorry. I made my life—I'm joking.

I grew up in that culture, right? We lived in cul-de-sacs. We didn't even have sidewalks. We had to use a litre of gasoline to get a litre of milk. I thought that was normal. We've all got to learn that that's not normal. If you want to drive a car, it's an electric vehicle; it's a low-carbon vehicle. These are the things that we must do. We say that the climate change strategy is overarching.

It's not too cold to ride your bike. I did it all weekend. I do it most weeks. It's not too cold.

I'm about to wrap up, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to conclude my remarks and leave some time for my brilliant, insightful friend from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rejoin all of my colleagues here in the House after our winter recess.

Indeed Bill 31 is a bill that I think all members of this Legislature and all residents of this province can endorse because it goes to the heart of what we all do. We're all either pedestrians or cyclists or we're in a motor vehicle. Our safety is the most important thing each and every day. There's nothing more important that the government can do than ensure the safety of its residents and citizens. This bill has a number of provisions that are going to improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers and passengers in motor vehicles. It's very important, and it's very timely that we're introducing it.

As a municipal councillor, keeping the roads and streets in my community was always one of the overarching responsibilities I had. I know that my constituents, whether they are drivers, cyclists or pedestrians in the riding of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, are going to be very happy when this legislation passes and is enacted. While this province has been ranked first or second in North America for road safety for the last 13 years, I know my constituents will be proud to hear that this government is doing even more to ensure the safety of everyone on our streets and roads.

On the subject of cyclists, there are many cyclists, even in a suburban community like Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who do ride their bikes every day, whether the weather is hot or it's cold and everything in between. From Lake Shore Boulevard in the south to Burnham-

thorpe in the north, the West Mall in the west, to Prince Edward Drive in the east, my residents are riding their bicycles to go to school, go to work, go to do shopping or to go to a public transit station and continue their journey further along. Anything that makes their daily commutes safer is going to be very welcome.

Bill 31 introduces amendments that address the safety of cyclists, including key recommendations from the #CycleON Action Plan, which was released earlier last spring. Mr. Speaker, cyclists in my riding and throughout the province will be happy to note that Bill 31 addresses the key issues, such as contra-flow bike lanes, bicycle-specific traffic signals and riding on paved shoulders, all of which will contribute to safer cycling environments for cyclists but also improve road safety for all road users, whether they're drivers or pedestrians, by making the roads safer.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to speak to how Bill 31 addresses other road safety issues that are major challenges in our province, including the very serious issue of impaired driving and distracted driving. Anybody who is on the roads of our province will encounter somebody using their cellphone or doing something else in their vehicle that is distracting them, where they are clearly not paying attention. They are trying to change a lane and cut you off. They are stopped at a green light or any of a number of other instances of bad driving or dangerous driving habits. Having these measures in place that will have stronger penalties around distracted driving is something which I think all Ontarians are looking forward to.

On the issue of drinking and driving fatalities, they represented close to a quarter of all fatalities on the roads in 2011. But according to recent statistics, over 45% of drivers killed in Ontario were found to have drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol in their system.

While there are sanctions to allow police to remove drivers from the road when they reasonably believe they have been impaired by alcohol, there are currently no provincial sanctions available for police to remove drivers from the road who they reasonably believe might be impaired by drugs. That's why we need to pass this bill, Mr. Speaker: to make sure that our law enforcement officials have all the tools that they can have in their tool kit to keep dangerous drivers off of our roads, to make sure that people who, whether they are impaired or they're not operating their vehicle in a safe manner because they are distracted—that they can be stopped, they can be fined and they can be removed from their vehicle at that moment, if need be, to ensure that everybody else can be on their way in a safe manner. So, Mr. Speaker, these provisions in Bill 31 are so incredibly important. I think all members of this House should embrace them and support them.

I also just wanted to say a few things that when—some comments have been made about linking climate change to this bill, and some have thought that's not really appropriate. Climate change is a real issue. Safe roads and allowing people to use our roads as complete streets is related to climate change.

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Making sure that our pedestrians have more confidence that when they walk on a street or a road, knowing that for those who are either impaired or those who are driving distracted, there are more tools in place to get them off the road; and to ensure that there's better public education around those issues so that all road users are safe; and encouraging more people to be pedestrians, encouraging more people to be cyclists, will improve our environment, will have a positive impact on climate change. While that's not the key issue in this bill, which is road safety, there will be benefits from this bill to encourage more people to use our streets as complete streets, complete roads, where all users can use them more safely.

In the time that I've been in the Legislature, now some eight or nine months, I've been proud to serve in a government where a number of important pieces of legislation have been passed. This, however, I can say to my constituents and to people all across Ontario, might be one of the pieces of legislation which will have the greatest impact on their daily lives, because it will make the roads and the streets that we all use each and every day safer. It will give them more confidence that law enforcement has tools in place to get irresponsible or reckless drivers off the road, and to make sure that there's the ability of municipalities to put in place better facilities for all road users to be able to navigate the highways and byways of this province safely and with the expectation that they can arrive at their destination or go home in the evening and be safe.

I encourage all members of this House to support Bill 31.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think that we keep sort of straying off the topic—and I just want to address that—which is that we need to somehow stop driving cars. I think, as somebody who likes to walk and likes to cycle, I don't really appreciate some of the lecturing that we see from the opposite side of the floor. I think that if we're really serious about helping people get out of cars, then we need a government—this is a majority government. They're the ones who are in power and can make the decisions to help get people out of their cars. And that's not just about downtown Toronto. That's about York region. That's about Hamilton. We have to look at it neighbourhood by neighbourhood.

But to expect people in this kind of weather to take public transit in the suburbs, where it's 20 minutes, 30 minutes to wait for a bus, is not realistic. In fact, it's not even safe. So we have to make the roads safe. We have to make the commutes shorter. We have to get people to be able to get in their car and not have to use it as a moving office, which is all too often what we're seeing. It's a moving office, or for families it's a den on wheels or a kitchen on wheels. Parents are giving their kids supper in the car on their way to hockey practice because the commute is so long.

I think that we have to focus the valuable transit dollars. I've spoken before about the rapidway that they're taking off of Highway 7, the Viva rapidway onto Bathurst, which is going to create traffic chaos for, as far as I'm concerned, a huge swath of miles for years to come. It's an over-\$100-million project and a four-year construction, and that money could be going for a better use. If we need to get people off the Yonge subway line because it's past capacity, then maybe we should be doing what other major cities do, which is tunnel under the Yonge subway line from downtown and build an express subway route up to the suburbs. But we cannot expect people to stand outside waiting for buses. People are going to use cars, and we have to be realistic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Hello. Welcome back, everybody. It's kind of nice. But I want to talk on the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. He did a 12-minute speech on a number of things. But let's not fool ourselves; climate change is an important issue. He's very passionate about it, so I'll give him that.

He talked about how we've got to get people out of their cars. I agree with that. I think everybody in the House agrees. But I've been here for a year talking about bringing GO trains to Niagara Falls, and guess what? It's not happening.

I'm trying to figure it out. If the government is saying to me, "We've got to get people out of their cars," what better way to do it? When I do my 20 minutes I'll tell you what happened to me last Friday on the way home from Toronto—I was here last Friday and drove home—and what I had to go through. I agree with them; let's get people out of their cars. But do you know what? You've got to bring GO to Niagara.

Via Rail—I used to get up at 6:30 in the morning. I'd get on Via Rail when I used to come to Toronto, and then I'd go to the Sheraton to participate in some bargaining, whether it would be with GM or one of the units that we were representing. I'd come back afterwards, get on the Via Rail, and go home back to Niagara.

Hon. James J. Bradley: What happened to Via Rail?

Mr. Wayne Gates: What happened? Via Rail is gone.

Interjection: You've got to go to Rob Nicholson.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I understand that, but I'm using that as an example. Those are the things we have to do as a province and as a country.

Then, last Friday—because I want to stay on the bill, because I don't want anybody from the Conservatives jumping in, "Oh, you're not staying on the bill"—I was leaving here at a quarter after 3—

Interjection: Go back to the bill.

Mr. Wayne Gates: This is part of the bill, I think. I'm driving down the road, and I come to a stoplight just two blocks from here. There's a young lady there, and guess what? At a red light, what's she doing? She's talking on the phone. Talking on the phone, right? I'm beeping my horn. I'm trying to get her attention. I couldn't get her

attention. Finally, the light turns green, she looks over, and I go like this to her: "I'm watching you." There's why we have to educate our young people how dangerous it is to be driving and texting. Anyway, there you go. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Han Dong: It's a pleasure to rise in the House and to comment on what my colleague the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and my colleague from Etobicoke–Lakeshore said. I've also been listening to the comments from across the floor.

I just want to remind everyone here that this bill is about road safety. Road safety includes anyone who uses those roads, including cyclists. I heard the argument about how this is going to promote more awareness of the environment and climate change, and that is very true, because if the road is safe to ride a bike, more people will be riding their bikes when the weather permits. It's completely their choice. This morning, while I was walking my dog, I saw a couple of cyclists using the bike lane on my street. This is great. If the weather is not too cold for them, should they choose to ride a bike, go ahead. All power to them.

I disagree with the member from Thornhill saying that this bill is intended to force people out of their cars. Where are the rights of the driver? Well, I need to remind you that part of this bill is to improve provisions on the 407. I want to remind this House that it was the Conservative government, when they were in power, who sold the 407. Talking about drivers' customer experience, talking about drivers' rights—they sold the highway.

We are making the biggest investment in the last 50 or 60 years in public infrastructure. You've got to be really fair looking at what we are proposing, and really understand what this bill is talking about. I was at the announcement with the minister because I'm fully in support of road safety, and I think that everyone who uses the road deserves this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm not exactly sure what I'm supposed to say, because the debate so far has had nothing to do with the actual bill, and that includes the first 12 minutes from the environment minister, who spoke about climate change. Last time I checked, there was nothing in this bill dealing with climate change, and then everybody who has spoken after has talked about climate change, so perhaps I should be talking about climate change. The minister really lost me, though, when he was talking about Speedos and a sack of potatoes. At that point, it was all over for me.

But let's go to the bill here just for a second, Mr. Speaker. I'll let you get your breath after getting that picture out of your head. Obviously we needed some stricter penalties when it came to distracted driving in the province, because in spite of the fact that we've brought in the fine, people were still talking on their phones while holding them in their hands. They were still texting while holding that phone in their hands.

I now have been converted, not because of the fines that have been coming from the other side, but just because I have a Bluetooth now, and it's much more convenient and safer for me to speak on my phone while driving with my Bluetooth on. It's not the penalties—and the penalties actually should be maybe even stiffer. We should have demerit points included in this as well.

1700

One of the parts that hasn't been mentioned, because we've been talking about climate change, is the fact that municipalities are actually going to benefit from this bill because they're going to be able to go out there and get millions and millions and millions of dollars that they haven't been able to collect in overdue Provincial Offences Act fines. In Hastings county alone—that would include the county, Belleville and Quinte West—there's over \$10 million in outstanding POA fines. After this bill is passed, they're going to be able to get their hands on that money and put it in the ground in much-needed infrastructure in their communities.

There's a lot of good things in this bill. We just didn't get to them in this debate, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for final comments.

Mr. Peter Z. Mileczyn: I want to thank the members from Thornhill, Niagara Falls, Trinity–Spadina and Prince Edward–Hastings for their comments.

The member from Prince Edward–Hastings made a very good contribution by reminding everybody about the very strong provisions here that will allow local municipalities to collect POA fines which they haven't been able to, which will be revenue they will be able to reinvest in infrastructure to make their roads and their streets safer.

The provisions in this bill around making cycling safer across Ontario are very important. The provisions in this bill about stronger fines for distracted driving, the provisions in this bill around changing some of the red tape around medically unfit drivers and their ability to get their licence back once they get medical clearance—those are all very important provisions in this bill.

Also the issue about impaired driving and giving law enforcement officials more tools to deal with people who are impaired not just by alcohol but by drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol—are very significant elements of this bill, which will benefit each and every person in this province, each and every day.

We did talk about some other issues. This bill contains so many important amendments to the Highway Traffic Act and the 407 act as well that will improve the safety on our roads and make it easier for Ontarians to pay their bills, retrieve their licences and have certainty that they can get home safely at the end of their day and that their kids will be safe on the streets of this province.

Again, I urge all members of the House to support Bill 31.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I'm now required to interrupt the

proceedings and announce that there has been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. James J. Bradley: My friend from Niagara Falls is going to be speaking next, so I'm going to let the debate continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I've been to Niagara Falls, I'll say to the member from St. Catharines, but they've never offered to make me a resident. In fact, I would decline because living in Barry's Bay in good, old Renfrew county—there is no better place. I guess I'm a little biased on that, but I'll accept that.

Bill 31—I have to pick up a little bit on the comments from my colleague from Prince Edward—Hastings: The environment minister, these days, all he wants to talk about is climate change. No matter what subject comes before the House, he's going to talk about climate change. I've heard some of the things he said about climate change in some of his travels, and I'm looking forward to bringing them up in this House for debate at some point because he has a tendency to just make these wild statements without any facts to back them up. He is passionate and he is committed but, at the same time, he tends to go off on a tangent and make these statements that cannot be verified.

He does say that he wants to get people out of cars, and I'd like to know what alternative he's proposing for my good folks in Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

Mr. Todd Smith: Horses.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I suppose. Perhaps he doesn't know, but I know he has been to my riding—we don't have alternatives. Even in the most ambitious plans, there are no plans to extend the subway up to Renfrew county. There's not a lot of public transportation, but we do have roads.

It's my opportunity maybe to speak about something that I'm passionate about. Perhaps in this budget—we're getting closer, Speaker—the government will realize that it would be wise to extend the gas tax rebate to all municipalities, not just those that have a public transportation system. In places like Renfrew county, your roads and your streets and your highways—that is your public transportation system. It's very unfair that we continue to pay that gas tax without getting our fair share back.

A lot of people think that because the price of crude has dropped, the government's revenues from taxation have dropped. Yes, from HST, they have. But that was a tax, as you'll remember, that former Premier Dalton McGuinty imposed on the people of Ontario after saying he wouldn't. But then they imposed the HST.

You see, the provincial excise tax—14.7 cents—and the federal tax—10.5 cents, is it, or 10.6?—those are fixed rates on a litre of fuel. It has nothing to do with what the price of crude is.

I need to explain—this is all for those people out there who think that the government is losing their excise tax

because of the price of oil going down and the price of gas at the pump going down, although it has been going back up more recently. No, no; their money is safe. It's like money in the bank. They're going to keep on taking it from you just as long as you keep on paying it.

That excise tax is a portion of the tax that they currently rebate to municipalities that have a public transportation system. It has got nothing to do with the HST. It is the excise tax, the provincial portion, that they rebate to those municipalities that have a public transportation system.

What I'd like to see is all municipalities across Ontario get their fair share of it. I know that there are Liberal members over there that agree with me, but you see, they're afraid to speak out. Oh, yes, they're afraid to speak out because of the big powerful hand that comes out of the corner office on the second floor that says, "Sh. Zip it. Don't say a word."

I'm going to get to the bill. Bill 31: There are a lot of good things in this bill. I'm going to speak about some of them.

I think the one right off the top of my head—municipalities, and I'm speaking about municipalities in Renfrew county when I'm talking about the gas tax rebate, but also the Provincial Offences Act and the fines: This should have been done long ago. They levy fines against people for traffic offences, minor offences, Highway Traffic Act Offences—whatever—but then they don't pay, and the municipality is out that money because as part of the changes that were made under the previous government, I believe it was, those fines would go to the municipalities, not the provincial treasury. The county of Renfrew gets the money for provincial offences in my riding.

Those people who are delinquent—there's no mechanism to go after them. Well, this bill will provide that mechanism so that they will not be able to have their permits reissued if their fines are in arrears. That's a good thing. I'll give the government credit for that. I think that's very, very positive. Why should those people who get pinched on the highway and get a fine be the ones who have to pay the bills for those who don't? If you make a mistake and you're convicted or you plead guilty or whatever, you pay your fine. If everybody pays their fine, the requirement for the treasury will actually be less on a per-incident basis because they won't have to be dealing with the delinquents and the arrears, plus the efforts in trying to collect those fines after the fact.

1710

There are a number of things here for pedestrian safety, highway safety. I don't want to go into all of them because I probably won't have time. It's almost an omnibus bill. It's not that thick. It's not as thick as that report on the gas plants that on the government side said nothing today, but it is a comprehensive bill from the point of view that it touches on a lot of different issues.

But probably the one and almost maybe the driving issue of our day is distracted drivers. It is not speeding. While it will always be a scourge, even impaired driving

is not the terrible threat that it used to be. More and more people are getting to the point where they realize that you just don't drink and drive. Now, having said that, the RIDE program in my riding this year had some disappointing numbers. It's disappointing for all of us that everyone hasn't gotten the message. But today, one of the biggest fears is the number of people—because not everybody drinks and drives. In fact, it's a very small percentage of people. But almost everybody owns one of these. Almost everybody who owns a car or drives a car owns one of these.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Or two.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Or two or three. And the temptation is unbelievable sometimes, that if you hear that thing beep or you feel it vibrate, the temptation is to, as quickly as possible—because we live in this crazy social media world, there's this feeling that you have to respond immediately to every communication. So technology has driven us to distraction, no pun intended. Technology has driven us to distraction.

If everybody in this House, myself included, were to answer the question, "Have you looked at your BlackBerry, read an email, read a message or even responded to one and got your thumbs working while you were driving?", I think we might be shocked at the number of people who would respond yes. And, yes—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Not I.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not Jim Bradley, because I don't even know if he owns one. But I'll say this complementarily, because Jim would actually be proud of it: Some might call him a Luddite.

Mr. Todd Smith: A Luddite?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes. That's an anti-technology guy. He's from the old days, you know?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Where are you from?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm from somewhere, but the debate is still raging.

And I would be guilty of that myself, Speaker. I would be guilty of that myself, so I'm not standing here sermonizing. I'm actually saying, "How big a problem is it?" I've done it myself. Should I be stopped while doing it, I would deserve the full force of the law.

Here we are. Even under this bill, the fine is going to rise to, I believe, \$1,000, which is a lot of money. But in every one of your ridings—well, some of you live in strictly urban ridings; it may not have happened. But if you live in a riding where there's an expanse of highway, you have read a story about people who were killed because the driver in one or both of the vehicles was found to be texting. They can determine that. Today, they can determine that. This is not something where the police say, "We believe the person may have been texting." No, they could take this BlackBerry, if I was involved in an accident, just like they've got the BlackBerry of David Livingston—not to go off topic, but they've got the BlackBerry of David Livingston, and they're going to find out some really good things out of that BlackBerry as well, but—

Hon. Michael Coteau: We're talking about safety and people's lives.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Michael, for getting me back on track.

They can take your BlackBerry and find an awful lot, even if you're no longer there to talk about it.

There are countless issues. There are some statistics to say that there are more people killed in accidents involving texting than there are alcohol-related collisions today. I am not for a moment saying that we should take any of the focus off impaired driving; absolutely not. Until there are no deaths from impaired driving, we must continue to focus on that. But this is a new phenomenon that didn't exist when they first came out with impaired-driving legislation and Breathalyzers and ways of determining what the blood alcohol level of a driver was.

We have to do something about this. Almost everyone owns one. If you have children and they're over the age of 16—maybe even younger. My youngest is 23. My children all have these. My wife has one; I've got one. We'd have to be living in some kind of a dream world to believe that neither myself nor any of them have ever inappropriately used that BlackBerry or—they don't have BlackBerries; they've got something else.

Mr. Todd Smith: iPhones.

Mr. John Yakabuski: iPhones and Samsungs and whatever; I'll just say "BlackBerry" in a general sense—or to believe that they've never used it inappropriately while driving. If we don't do something to curb that, the carnage on our roads is only going to increase.

This bill begins to put more emphasis on it. It does it in a way that hits the pocketbook. There are demerit points, I believe, that are going to be attached to this as well. It's not in the bill but it will be in the regulations.

If someone has a fatal accident and they were impaired but they're not the casualty, we will socially ostracize that person for consciously doing something that was absolutely wrong, and we should. That is the right thing to do. We haven't reached that point with a driver who may cause an accident because they were texting or doing something else inappropriate with their handheld device—BlackBerry or otherwise. We're not there yet.

The numbers say that more people are being killed today because of texting and distracted driving than by impaired driving. Will this make the persons who are doing it the social pariahs that the impaired driver once was or still is today? Probably not, because we look at this still as a momentary lapse. They heard the thing go off and they thought—one of their kids had a big hockey tournament and maybe this was the email that said they won the gold first A division championship. Or whatever—"My boss said he might be in touch with me. We might have a big deal on the go." Well, there we go.

Without making the penalties severe, we will not reach that place where people accept that it is wrong. You have to put meat on the bone. I'll tell you how wrong it is, sir: It's \$1,000 and X number of demerit points wrong. That's what it is. Do you want to quantify this? It's no longer chicken feed. It's no longer pocket change. It's \$1,000 and X number of demerit points. And

we are going to have to make it clear to people that if you're going to be doing this, you will pay the price.

1720

Now, this has kind of been the—well, I'm trying to think of the word. I'm stuck for the word. But it has kind of been the catalyst to bring in this kind of legislation. But it is not the only form of distracted driving that we are becoming victim to. There are too many things that are taking people's attention away from what they should be doing when they are on the road.

What would you think if a doctor was performing surgery on you, Speaker, and they were getting down to the nitty-gritty, and he says, "Just hang on. I got a text from my wife. I'll be right with you"? Well, you wouldn't be very impressed, because he or she would be taking their attention away from a critical task, a critical task that in surgery, we would all accept, could be a matter of life and death.

So if you're on the highway, and you're in a machine a couple of tons, hurtling down the highway at 100-and-some kilometres an hour—well, we're going to stick to the speed limit for the time being.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Get up to 100, John.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Let's just say 80 kilometres an hour—90 kilometres an hour on the Trans-Canada Highway; 90 kilometres an hour, two lanes, like it is through most of my riding, but I'm hopeful that the ministry is going to start to see the importance of extending that to four lanes. But you're hurtling down that highway at 90 kilometres an hour and someone else is hurtling down the highway in the opposite direction at 90 kilometres an hour. Even with my rudimentary math skills, I know that combined that's 180 kilometres an hour. You understand the energy of those two objects should they collide. Well, that's not something that is a matter of life and death? Absolutely. Absolutely, Speaker. Distracted driving is a matter of life and death.

I'm not in the habit—there are a few things in this bill that maybe I don't exactly like, but I haven't got all day. So I'm going to give the government credit. There will be amendments needed on it. I've read the bill, but I can't speak on it if you don't give me enough time.

But on this section of the bill, which I think—to me the most important asset we have is our youth: our children, our grandchildren—our youth. Because they will be the people who populate this place tomorrow, and they will be the people who lead us as we're old. So if we're not going to do something that guides them but also protects them, then we are not doing our job. Today, this is the beginning of doing our job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Comments and questions?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to stand in this House after our chilly winter break and be back up on my feet talking on behalf of residents of the great riding of Windsor-Tecumseh, especially following the very entertaining comments from my friend from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

I just want to touch on a couple of things that he talked about. He talked about the fine for distracted driving

going up to \$1,000, and that's a good thing. I just question the wisdom—if I make reference to what they are going to do with bicycles, they are going to require a head lamp on a bicycle, a reflector on the back. They are going to require reflective tape on the front spokes, reflective tape on the rear. Every person who contravenes this section is guilty of an offence and on conviction is liable to a fine of not less than \$300 and not more than \$1,000. So, Speaker, they are going to treat bicycles—\$1,000 fine—as bad as a distracted-driving fine. So I think we can work on some things as the bill goes to committee for some improvements.

The member also talked about one of the greatest mysteries of all time: gas pricing. With the price of oil dropping by the barrel, you can drive past a gas station on the way to work and it's 85 cents; on the way home, it's 99.9; and three days later, it's back down to 80, then back up to 99. I don't get it. The price of oil hasn't changed in that time period but, in Ontario, there's all this gouging going on at the pump. I only mention that because the great member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke brought that up.

I do like the fact that municipalities will have the right to finally go after the provincial offences. Thank you for your time, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I was glad when you asked, Mr. Speaker, if the debate could continue. I, speaking on behalf of the government, said yes, of course it should continue because we had an excellent speech from the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I thought it was one of his more positive speeches as well.

I did note that he deviated a bit from the content of the bill to begin with to talk about the gas tax. Of course he would know that it's two cents of the gas tax. If he were to pull it into every municipality in the province of Ontario, that would mean less for Belleville, less for Woodstock, less for St. Catharines, less for Peterborough, less for Niagara Falls and less for Brampton. How does the government overcome that? It has a special formula now for infrastructure purposes that helps rural Ontario, and I'm very supportive of that.

I want to say, as well, that when I was Minister of Transportation, we brought in the initial legislation on this. There was much apprehension and, in fact, some opposition to it, so the penalties were somewhat modest in those days. I contemplated at the time that eventually those would have to go up. First of all, there were no points to be lost if one violated it. As the member from Barry's Bay has said, the amount is rather modest in the present penalty regime. So I think it's most appropriate that we see the increased penalties for the very reasons that the member talked about.

I was pleased he was able to make his speech. I also wanted to hear the member for Niagara Falls, which is why, instead of cutting off debate, I wanted to ensure that the debate would continue because he will have some gems of wisdom, no doubt.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to address a comment that my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke mentioned about the youth. Youth is the future of our great province and our great country. The youth have really been educated. The public awareness campaign against drinking and driving really came through to this generation that's in university and high school now. They designate a driver. They make alternate plans. They take public transit or taxis or get lifts. They figure it out, and there is zero tolerance for drinking and driving. What we need to do is, we need to work on the youth and educate them about the perils of distracted driving.

Distracted driving, I would remind everybody who's listening today, is not just about cellphones and smart phones. It's also about putting makeup on, eating and all the things that people are doing in their cars. Why? Because, too often, the commute has doubled for many people in the last couple of decades. They're spending way too much time in their cars. They're treating it like an office or a part of their home. We have to educate the kids to really keep an eye on their parents. I know that when I've gone through the left turn—you're waiting for the left turn and sometimes it's red already by the time you're making a left turn—my kids were never very happy with that when I was driving. I used to try to explain that when you are trying to make a left turn, it's so tricky.

It's the same thing with kids watching their parents in terms of drinking and driving. I think we could bring the kids on board, and maybe we need some kind of public awareness campaign about distracted driving, and include everything in that. The focus, again, has to be on what we can do to cut down on the commute because we all know that the longer you're in the car, the more dangerous it is and the more likely people are to do something that will distract them from the task at hand.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: One of the things that was brought up earlier in the debate was that this bill was a combination of a number of ideas and input from various members. I think that's something that we would like to see more of, the fact that we can all work together towards sometimes a common vision. In this bill, there are some components that I think we've done a tremendous amount of good work on, particularly when it comes to some of the cycling initiatives. I'm an avid cyclist, and I think it's important that we encourage it. Obviously, depending on where you are in the province and what type of infrastructure you have, it may not be the only or the best solution for various residents across the province, but in certain areas it's an amazing alternative to driving. It's something we need to encourage and support, and the more we support it and encourage it, the more people will actually cycle.

Major cities across the world have turned towards cycling as a great activity to encourage exercise and to

encourage people to get out and be active, and it is also a great way to reduce congestion. It's often one of the quickest ways to get around, and it's an important tool in addressing not only climate change but also the fact that, as a society, we're seeing more and more sedentary lifestyles leaving an impact in terms of people's health. It's certainly something that can assist in a wide variety of forums or fields.

Distracted driving: We've talked about it, and we're all in agreement that there is certainly behaviour that is dangerous on the road. There are certain things that people are doing when they're driving that put them at a higher risk for accidents. Obviously, whatever we can do to discourage those types of activities would be great. I think it's important for us to take that initiative and ensure that, whether through education or through various forms of legislation, we make sure that our roads are as safe as possible.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to add my voice to this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Back to the member for a final response.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the members for Windsor–Tecumseh, St. Catharines, Thornhill and Bramalea–Gore–Malton for their comments today. I did want to just touch on the comments of the member for St. Catharines on the gas tax rebate. Whether or not a municipality would lose as a result of that is entirely up to the government's policy. There are many, many ways in which you can fund municipalities. It doesn't mean for one second that, if further municipalities receive a portion of the gas tax, other municipalities wouldn't be funded in some other way for their public transportation system. I just wanted to clarify that, because that's a government policy issue that is far deeper than just trying to pigeonhole that one item.

But again, I'm trying to be positive today on some of the initiatives that the government has brought forward. I spoke briefly about two of them today, one being the scourge of distracted driving, on which I think we all need to be vigilant and diligent in our commitment to ensure that we try to convince everyone that this is the wrong thing to do. Not only could you endanger yourself, but you could endanger the lives of many, many others.

The other thing I touched on and want to reiterate again is how important it is for municipalities such as mine in Renfrew county that there be more of a penalty for those people who are delinquent in paying their Highway Traffic Act provincial offences fines that are currently submitted to the municipality. By having this in the bill, which will penalize those people—they won't be able to get a permit—this will help municipalities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member. Further debate.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you for allowing me to speak on this quite extensive bill here today. As you can see, Bill 31 combines a number of previous bills into one bill, so I'll work through some of the ideas presented here. I believe the general idea and the spirit of the bill is

captured in its title—legislation to make Ontario roads safer.

As many of you know, the riding of Niagara Falls is a major border crossing, connecting both Fort Erie and Niagara Falls to New York state at a number of crossings. For decades, these have been some of the busiest borders in Canada and have solidified the deep trading partnership between us and our neighbours to the south.

Keeping this province's roads safe and clear is a priority for both myself and the people of my riding. We have so many jobs in Niagara that depend on this transportation: jobs in the auto sector, the tourism sector, the winemaking sector and the farming sector. Making sure that these businesses can function smoothly by keeping our roads safe and clear is necessary to protect jobs in Niagara and across the province of Ontario.

Let's talk about distracted driving. The first part of this bill addresses some things that are becoming a major problem on our roads. I want to say one point clearly. I'm sure many of you have already heard it, but it's important that we say it again: According to the OPP, distracted drivers have become the number one killer—number one—on our roads here in Ontario. When the people who live in this province are put in harm's way because of distracted drivers, then the members in this House have an obligation to act.

Cellphone technology is advancing at a rapid pace, and we need to make sure that our laws are keeping up with that progress. This involves two things: making sure the proper fines are in place and making sure that the right education is available. Currently, the range of fines for driving distracted is \$60 to \$500. This bill seeks to increase it to from \$300 to \$1,000 plus three demerit points on a licence, which is important, for anyone caught driving while distracted. These fines are acceptable because, like I mentioned, this has become the most dangerous thing occurring on our roads.

We can't just slap these fines on people if they don't understand the issue fully. Yes, hefty fines can act as a deterrent, but there are organizations out there that are really trying to get people to understand how dangerous distracted driving is. CAA is a great example. CAA are the ones who do the studies and tell us things like the fact that drivers engaged in text messaging and on cellphones are 23 times more likely to be involved in a crash or a near-crash event compared with non-distracted drivers, and that international research shows that 20% to 30% of all collisions involve distracted drivers. Mr. Speaker, these are incredibly important statistics. We need to make sure that this legislation works with their efforts to educate people on the dangers and adequately punish those who ignore the signs.

There are opportunities to work with our institutions and with our schools to make this happen, either at the elementary or high school level or at university or college, like Brock University and Niagara College in my riding.

I can remember when seat belts—and I think we all can remember; there's a lot of people here today—were

first introduced. No one followed the rules, and they didn't wear them or weren't really concerned about why they were so important. Over time, this notion began to change. People began to see the importance and understand why seat belts were necessary. Nowadays, you never see someone get into a car with their children and not put on the seat belt; it's unheard of.

Sometimes people find it's so easy to justify using cellphones really quickly on the road or just sending one- or two-word texts or reading a quick response. But we need to do with cellphones what we did with seat belts. Distracted drivers are putting thousands of people at risk every day. If these fines will help end that, then so be it.

But I don't think we should just up the fines and assume the problem will take care of itself. Yes, some people may put down the cellphone, knowing how bad these fines are. But you also need to work on education. This government and every member in this House need to work on making sure people understand how unsafe distracted driving is and how important it is to work together.

I know I've only got 10 minutes on this, so I'll go to another part. But I want to say how important that is to my 17-year-old daughter, Jacqueline, who just started driving. She just got her licence, and we spent a lot of time talking to her about the importance of making sure that both hands are on the wheel and she's driving safely. All of us have to understand that.

1740

I'll go to the second part because, like I said, I'm cutting short on time here. In the interests of time, I'm only going to touch on one other part of this bill—which, like I said, is very lengthy and contains many changes—and that is the changes to the Highway 407 East Act. Of course, we all know that the 407 was opened in 1997 and in 1999 was leased to a private operator so the Conservative government at the time could use that money in their budget. In 2013, the over \$800 million the 407 made went to a private company instead of to the people of this province.

In 2012, the Ontario government enacted the Highway 407 East Act, which will govern the extension of the 407 when completed. This project is a P3, operated and maintained by, for the most part—which is concerning—the same private companies that currently operate the 407. So what we see is that the Conservatives opted to make the 407 private and that the Liberals are dealing with the same private owners today.

Here's the problem that we have with this: For the most part, the 407 is becoming a highway for the well-off. To drive on the 407 costs someone a car payment these days. Not only does the money not go back into the hands of the people in this province, but they are being excluded from even using the highway.

Under Bill 31, the registrar of motor vehicles no longer has to notify people that their plates will not be renewed 30 days before the licence plate renewal is necessary—and I really want everybody, all these parties, to listen to this, because this is a real issue—should

people have an outstanding ETR bill. That would be okay in a perfect world, where everyone knew exactly how much they owed to the ETR and when they had to pay. I wish this bill would address some of the larger issues posed by the 407 billing, but for now we just have to discuss the change.

We hear the strangest stories about 407 bills today. We hear things where they'll presume the person received the bill, and when they forget about it for a while—years later, they come back and think about it, and with all the compound interest and fees, they say you have to pay an amount that sometimes is 40 times higher than the original bill. I'd like to point out that the annual interest rate of a 407 bill is 25%—25%. So if you didn't receive an invoice, or you did receive one and easily forgot, you could be in a lot of trouble somewhere down the road.

Mr. Speaker, we hear crazy cases where deceased spouses are still having their bills handed off to their loved ones. So imagine now: You're a single person working hard to support yourself and your family, and along comes this bill. Maybe you were in a rush one day and you had to take the 407, or maybe the QEW was congested because of how much traffic was on it, and you needed to get to Toronto.

I'm trying to get this all in. Why would we not want to discuss these toll fees publicly? Now when you're going to raise the fees, in this bill, it says here that there doesn't have to be any public consultation. I don't think we should do that. I'm hoping that when we get to committee, we can say, "Listen, that might not make a lot of sense, because we have to serve the public." I'm not sure that removing them from any debate over toll fees is the best thing to do.

While the official explanation is that it gives the Ministry of Transportation the ability to increase the fees based on inflation, unfortunately, that's not the only power that they get with this sort of legislation. If it was just put into the bill where they could just raise it by the rate of inflation with no consultation, maybe you could have some really earnest discussion around that. But that's not what they're saying. They're saying no; they can raise it up to inflation, but they can also raise it more. To me, that doesn't make any sense. Like I said, driving on the 407 is very expensive.

I'll finish off because I've only got five seconds left. However, I'd like to say, especially around the 407 changes, that there need to be some changes made in committee.

I want to thank my good friend from St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, for giving me the opportunity to prolong the debate and letting me speak. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member from Niagara Falls.

Questions and comments? The deputy government House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm glad to respond to the member's excellent speech. It's very hard to get into 10 minutes all the information that you'd like to, but he touched on many interesting aspects.

One was Highway 407. If you ever wanted to hear—you know how they use the word "scandal" every time you turn around now? There was a scandal, because you will recall that it was worth about \$10 billion. Because they wanted to show a balanced budget in the year 1999—some history on this—they sold it at a fire sale for \$3 billion. Not only that, but it was a sweetheart deal because the company that owns it now can raise the price anytime they want.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: For 99 years.

Hon. James J. Bradley: For 99 years. I can understand the member's consternation at this.

You'll say, "Where are the emails over that? Where's the information?" When the government left office in 2003, the shredders were burning out as they were shredding all the government material at that time. That was allowed. The same people who are now complaining about deletions deleted everything. They just put it in the shredder. They backed the shredders up, and out everything went.

The member mentioned, earlier in the day—and he wanted to get this in his speech—GO Transit. What he recognized, and what I think a lot of people recognize now, is that the cat got the tongues of all the Conservatives in our area when Via Rail ended its service. We used to have—he made reference to it earlier—an outstanding Via Rail service, and it disappeared. CKTB wasn't going to come to Ottawa to have a special program. There weren't resolutions passed. Nothing happened. The Tories were all silent when Via Rail disappeared from St. Catharines and Niagara Falls.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the deputy government House leader for that interesting piece of history and move over to further questions and comments.

Mr. Todd Smith: "Selective memory" is all I can say. Selective memory. I can tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker: The member opposite doesn't carry a BlackBerry but he remembers his talking points from 12 years ago like it was yesterday. It's a remarkable thing.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's 99 years.

Mr. Todd Smith: He's 99 years old?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: The lease is 99 years.

Mr. Todd Smith: Oh, I thought you said he was 99 years old. I'm so sorry. He's not quite that old yet.

Let's go back to the remarks of the member from Niagara Falls. They were excellent remarks, although he was trying to get as much as he possibly could in there and I don't think he ever did actually get to the Via discussion which he mentioned earlier this afternoon.

When it comes to the distracted driving portion of this piece of legislation, I think we all agree that we are headed in the right direction with this piece of legislation when it comes to educating the people of Ontario about the dangers of distracted driving and increasing the penalties to make it a far more expensive proposition to get caught holding onto a hand-held device while driving in this province.

There has been a public relations campaign that has been going on. You'll see the little red stop signs on the

backs of vehicles along our highways: “Stop Texting”; “No Texting”; “Don’t Text and Drive.” These types of magnets are on the backs of vehicles, and I think they eventually are having the same effect.

The member from the third party was talking about the seat belt legislation that came in. I can tell you that as soon as I get in a vehicle right now, when my 12-year-old daughter is in the back seat, before I even put the car in gear: “Get your seat belt on, Dad.” She knows about not drinking and driving. She knows about texting and driving and the dangers of it. So our young people are educated on this. I think what we have to do is take these smart phones, stick them in the glove compartment when you get in the vehicle and then take them out of the glove compartment when you get out. Definitely a public relations campaign can go a long way to end distracted driving.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I’d like to comment on my good friend from Niagara Falls, who was prepared for 20 minutes and cut down to 10 this afternoon—but if I can begin by speaking to the member from St. Catharines who talked about Highway 407 and the scandal that was involved when it was sold off by a former Conservative government.

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Earlier today, the Minister of Agriculture called it the biggest scandal of the 20th century. The deputy House leader, the minister without portfolio, just said that part of that scandal was that they allowed the operators of the highway to raise the toll rates any time they wanted—big scandal. What bothers me, and it should bother every one of us on all sides of the House, is that there used to be a thing in this bill, and this minister has taken it out, that said on an annual review the public will be consulted on any annual increase. They’re taking it out. Now there’s a scandal unto itself. They’re taking it out. You should be able to talk about a rate increase on Highway 407. They’re taking it out, and I don’t know why. Maybe at some point, we’ll hear about that.

They used to apply a second notice: If you get a bill, and you don’t pay, they give you a reminder. They’re taking that out. They don’t have to give you a second reminder any more. How many of us have heard about somebody who got a bill for driving on the 407 when they were parked in a driveway in Windsor, Waterloo or Wawa? They weren’t on the 407. The plate readers aren’t 100% accurate. Now you don’t even get a reminder to say, “What is this? I’ve got to check into this.” You go to renew your plate, and you can’t do it, and your car wasn’t there. So this has to be changed.

You still need to consult the public in an open, transparent government—to consult on any annual rate increase.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It’s a pleasure to add my comments on the member from Niagara Falls. I listened to him, and

I listened to the previous speaker as well. It’s not very often that we have some general consensus of where this thing’s going, and that’s a good thing. But realizing that it’s been here a number of times before with different faces, different versions—I think as we do this, we learn.

I was here in my previous life when I think Minister Bradley—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Previous life?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Well, you know, John; here.

Interjection: Reincarnated.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Reincarnated.

We started going down this path, we learned, and we’re making improvements to the piece.

But let me focus, in just the minute I’ve got left, on allowing municipalities extra powers to collect from the Provincial Offences Act. I’m not sure who in this House remembers—certainly I was the mayor of Brighton at that time—when the former government did an awful lot of downloading, and to please the municipalities of the day, they said, “We’re going to give you this.” It didn’t even come close, Speaker, but they had some hope, and—well, I was going to use a word that I’m sure will be called unparliamentary. The municipalities really got done in. That was the legislation, the omnibus bill, who does what to who and who gets the worst of it. So we’ve been trying to get this through, Speaker, to give those municipalities the much-needed revenue they have been asking for. Frankly, it was entitled to them.

So I really look forward, at the end of this debate, to making sure we get this passed. Yes, we’ve talked about amendments, but there are some that are so necessary to get done. I know every municipal leader I speak to really wants to see this happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Back to the member from Niagara Falls for final comments.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thanks very much for everybody’s comments—my colleagues’.

I want to talk real quick in my two minutes because I had a few other things I’d like to talk about. I talked a little bit about the texting that we saw. I was driving home last Friday; I left here around 3 or 10 after 3. Again, it was just lucky, I guess, that my good friend Mr. Bradley was on the highway I was at the same time. I left Toronto to go home to spend time with my family, and it took me three hours to get home. The highway was packed. Mr. Bradley, who’s been here for—I don’t know—40 years, can remember when it used to take an hour or an hour and 15 minutes to go to St. Catharines and to Niagara Falls. The problem we have today is that 50,000 commuters are coming from Niagara Falls to Toronto. Where it used to be backed up maybe just to Oakville, it’s now backed up at all the way into Niagara.

We’re talking about safe roads and making sure they’re safe, and we had the Minister of the Environment talking about, “We’ve got to get people out of our cars.” What better way to do it than to have two-way GO all the way to Niagara Falls, all the way to St. Catharines? That’s how you do it.

I want to say to my colleagues in the Liberal government, you have to deliver on that. If we want to fix our

roads, make them safer, make sure our businesses, our industry, our wine industry, our farmers, are going to be competitive, we've got to clear the congestion off the highway. The way to do that—and I know my colleague has said it in his re-election—we're going to bring GO to Niagara. Let's just get it done. Let's get it done as quick as possible, and we can work together on that to make sure that our roads are safe for our kids and our grandkids.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Monsieur le Président, c'est un plaisir de m'adresser à vous en ce début d'année.

It's a pleasure to address you and wish you first and foremost a happy new year. I know we're in February, but it's the first time that I'm sitting in this House—

Interjection: Chinese New Year.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Chinese New Year. Happy Chinese New Year.

I'm very proud of what Ontario has been doing for the past 13 years, ranking first and second in North America on our road safety. Our government is very proud of our record of having among the safest roads here in North America.

It gives me great pleasure to talk about Bill 31, and I will be sharing my time with my colleague from Ottawa South today.

Interjection.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: The little bit left. We'll share it by Thursday, guys.

One thing that I heard a lot today is how much we have evolved when it comes to how far we have come along; I think somebody was mentioning that not too long ago, my grandfather—we were able to drive and drink in our vehicles. You were able to get in your vehicle without a safety—

Interjection: Seat belt.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: A seat belt. Thank you.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have laws and new enforcement, and I would like to say that now technology is part of our every day. I heard the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke talking about our cellphones. We sometimes have one, two—

Interjection: Three.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: —and a colleague of yours says three cellphones. So technology has changed

our world. Technology has made us feel almost obsessed with the word “busy.” Multi-tasking is also a common practice.

When I talk to my colleagues and friends and family, most of the time people say, “How are you?” and everybody says, “I'm busy.” So I'm going to reflect back and think that when you are driving, the main focus should be on the road. There are too many issues and uncontrollable environments, parts of our environment that reflect on how, potentially, not focusing on the road can harm you.

One thing that's important, Mr. Speaker, is that when we're driving, we are responsible for ourselves, but also for the lives of others. For me, when you think about driving, you should definitely focus your full attention on the driving section.

I was talking with my colleague, and we were talking—when we're driving, we are almost—and I say “almost,” and I'll put it in quotes—a potential weapon of 2,000—

Interjection.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Of 2,500 pounds—

Interjection.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Mr. Speaker, you're telling me I need to wrap up. Is that what you're saying?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): One minute.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: One minute left?

Interjection.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: One minute left. Ah, I see. Okay. Thank you.

So, unfortunately, that weapon that's in our hand is definitely something that we have to focus. I'm very happy to see that our government is taking action in improving the safety of our roads. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I apologize for having to interrupt the speaker from Ottawa—Orléans, but the time for debate today has come to an end.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): You will be permitted—and your designate—to continue debate at a better time, but since it is now 6 o'clock, this Legislature stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
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Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
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Mercredi 18 février 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 18 February 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 18 février 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2015 LOI DE 2015 SUR L'IMMIGRATION EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 4, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 49, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Good morning, Speaker. It's good to be back in the Legislative Assembly. I know we did a lot of hard work as MPPs back in our ridings, and it's kind of a bittersweet return. It's good to be here, but it's also nice to be home and do the real work that we're elected to do with our constituents.

Today it's a pleasure to rise as the MPP for London-Fanshawe, as I am the citizenship and immigration critic, to debate Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act. This bill was originally introduced in February 2014, as Bill 161, by the previous Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Honourable Mike Coteau.

When we're looking at immigration to Ontario, we know that Ontario has been falling behind when it comes to the number of immigrants who arrive in Ontario. From 2001 to 2011, the proportion of immigrants to Ontario declined by almost a third, from a 59.3% peak in 2001 to 40% in 2011. These numbers are the lowest share Ontario has seen in 30 years. So there is a problem, Speaker, when it comes to attracting newcomers to Ontario. It is estimated that Ontario will face a shortage of 364,000 skilled workers by the year 2025.

Statistics Canada indicates that among the Canadian population in 2011, three large generations can be identified using demographic criteria: the baby boomer generation, the parents of baby boomers and the children of baby boomers. In the coming years, many of the baby boomers will reach the age of 65, accelerating the popu-

lation of seniors past working age in Canada. By 2031, all baby boomers will have reached 65, and the proportion of seniors could reach 23%." That comes from Statistics Canada.

We have a skills shortage when it comes to specific skills in Ontario. Immigration is a component and a crucial part of our economy and educational future so that we can respond to labour market needs and remain competitive.

Immigration will make Ontario a better place to live. Immigration would need to be more than 2.5 times greater than it is today to offset the decline in Ontario's labour force being caused by the aging population.

In 2012, an expert round table released a report called *Expanding Our Routes to Success*. It included 32 recommendations. This minister, at the time, announced the launch of *A New Direction: Ontario's Immigration Strategy*. This report set out the following targets. I'll read some of them. One of them was: "Request a doubling of our provincial nominee program limit to 2,000 in 2013, increasing to 5,000 in 2014." This bill is part of that recommendation. It is looking for the federal government to allow us to increase immigrants coming to Ontario—newcomers coming to Ontario—to 5,000.

It also recommends:

"Achieve employment rates and income levels for immigrants that are in line with those of other Ontarians.

"Maximize the potential and the use of temporary foreign workers and international students.

"Improve job prospects of non-economic immigrants.

"Provide more resources for employers to recruit and welcome immigrant employees."

That's very important, Speaker, because when we're inviting, when we're trying to sell Ontario, we have to make sure that people who come here have job prospects, and the employers should communicate to this government what their needs are in the job market so we can fill them; we can fill them with people who already work here and we can also fill them with newcomers looking for new opportunities.

It also says we should:

"Encourage employers to develop or expand mentorship, internship and on-the-job training programs.

"Achieve 5% francophone immigration."

That is very important as well.

"Increase employment rates of immigrants in fields that match their experience." We have a lot of concerns with respect to that. We know a lot of professional newcomers come to this country with credentials that are quite high-level skilled, but they have trouble finding

work. We've heard from newcomers and immigrants who are here that the trouble is that their credentials aren't recognized; therefore, that sets barriers in their field for them being employed in what they were trained to do.

They also recommended that we should: "Work toward a decrease in the unemployment rate of recent immigrants so that it is in line with that of other Ontarians." That speaks to the fact that when we have newcomers come to Ontario, we don't have programs to fill those job gaps; therefore, they end up being unemployed.

Having someone come to this country, and they're looking for new opportunities, they're looking to work hard and have their family come here or have a family and start their life here—no one wants to do that without an employment opportunity, an employment prospect. You can't survive without having that employment prospect.

Another recommendation is: "Increase the number of immigrants licensed in their professions." Again, could we do that? We could look at having that retraining, having those credentials upgraded if they need to be, so that professionals—like doctors, like engineers—can actually come here and work. There are many, many professionals who aren't living up to their full potential with their educational background when they arrive in Ontario.

0910

This is an interesting one: "Create a ... forum to drive a 'no wrong door' approach to accessing immigrant services." We hear many times that, when immigrants or newcomers come to Canada, they have limitations on services they can access. You know, we open our doors for them to come here and work here. They should be deserving enough to use our services—our educational services and our health services.

"Commit to annual reports on progress and achievement." That's something where I think this government is lacking in doing that. Setting targets is great, but once you set those targets we need those reports to confirm that work has been done, that you've reached those targets and been successful. That's something I'll speak to later; in the Auditor General's report they actually also recommend that this government should be tracking and reporting the success of this program.

Another thing they suggest—this is kind of common sense; I'm not sure why it hasn't been done already—is, "Establish a minister's table with employers to consult businesses on immigration matters." Maybe that has been done already, but I find it highly strange that, if it's a recommendation in the expert round table, they actually had to include that recommendation for the government to consult with businesses on immigration matters—what their needs are, what the deficiencies are, where they need help and what can be improved.

I hope as well that, as these programs are being developed, as the provincial nominee program is implemented and as this act goes through the House, hopefully gets passed and goes into legislation, we also will consult with the people we want to come here—the newcomers,

the immigrants—on what their barriers are, because we need a full picture. When we're going to address the outcome, the performance of a program, we need—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There are about six sidebars going on, and I'm having trouble even hearing the speaker, so I'd appreciate, if you have any major discussions, you taking them outside. Thank you.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: The participants in these programs need to be consulted and need to give feedback. They need to give success stories and need to give stories of not being successful in order for this government to get it right. Right now, the government is only reintroducing this bill—it's number 49—and it's designed to increase the class of economic immigrants. They want to promote immigrants, newcomers coming here, to work in Ontario.

In February 2014, there had been some debate on the bill in the House—at that time it was Bill 161—by then NDP MPP and immigration critic Michael Prue. At the time he did the lead on the bill, he remarked that he had been seeking immigration reform in the province for more than a decade, and he supported many of the ideas behind this bill. I can speak on behalf of myself and our caucus: We do agree with the premise of this bill and the intent of the bill, so we would like to see it move forward and be debated and given some feedback in this House. Then, when it gets to committee, hopefully some of the real work can be done to make these changes on this bill a positive thing for newcomers when they get here.

This bill is a step in the right direction, but, like Mr. Prue, I have concerns that this bill isn't as strong as it could be. Michael called the bill, then 161, timid, because it only gave the minister the ability to set regulations for how to act, and did not actually prescribe how to act by laying out a clear framework. That's always important. If you're going to have the captain of the ship drive that ship, he needs to have the power to create policy and a framework of the course of that ship. The lack of substance persists with Bill 49. When you read through the sections of the bill, there is a lot of "the minister may" in this piece of legislation. Therein lies the rub, Speaker.

New Democrats have been very clear that we support a made-in-Ontario solution for immigrants. Ontario will be following behind a number of other provinces like Manitoba, British Columbia and Quebec, some of which have had detailed immigration laws on the books for a long time. Of course, this legislation was very much prodded by changes that the federal government would like to see, which I'll return to later.

New Democrats agree that, in order for this province to grow and assume our rightful place, we need to encourage more economic immigration to this province, but as of right now this is really only a piece of economic legislation. New Democrats are glad to see at least that in the preamble to this bill.

The preamble reads: "The government of Ontario is committed to implementing a vision of immigration to the province that recognizes not only the important role

that immigrants play in growing the economy across Ontario but also the importance of family and humanitarian commitments.” But as my colleague for Windsor—Tecumseh pointed out when he spoke on the introduction of this bill, if this government finally wants to bring Ontario into line with other jurisdictions in this country, like Manitoba, British Columbia and Quebec, that if Ontario wants more control over immigration, then with that greater control, that greater power, comes greater responsibility.

Since under this bill the minister will have new powers to set the course of immigration in this province, this could mean getting out of the detention business, for instance. We’ll see if that’s actually the case: if the government’s intent is really to do that and get out of the detention business when it comes to immigration.

It could mean ensuring that any individual within Ontario can gain access to services they need to ensure they are productive and safe, regardless of status. Where better than within legislation governing immigration in this province? That’s what New Democrats mean by greater responsibility.

I should point out that I’m glad this government saw fit last year to end the long practice of co-operating with the federal enforcement of immigration warrants through traffic stops. This practice exclusively profiled individuals working in vehicles, and I’m glad that New Democrats could help bring this issue to light.

I think it was in 2000 and—gosh, it’s been a while. I can’t remember exactly. What had happened was that it came to light that the provincial government, the MTO, was working with the Canada Border Services Agency and they were doing traffic stops and vehicle inspections. They were pulling over drivers in vehicles just because they were ethnic; they were diverse in nature. They were not checking their vehicle, per se, but their status, and many of them were deported. When we brought this to the minister for the MTO, the Honourable Mr. Del Duca, he looked into it, so I have to give him credit for that, and he did respond by saying that that practice would not continue any further.

Good immigration policy means making sure that new immigrants and their families can settle here and that the services and resources they need to integrate and succeed, such as access to affordable housing, are explicitly factored into the legislation.

I was given this card by an advocate for newcomers to Canada. Decent housing is not just for people who live here. Decent housing is for people we want to come here as well. If we’re asking newcomers to come to Canada, immigrants to come and work here and live here, let’s provide them with decent housing so that they can find those supports that they need and thrive.

Good immigration policy means making sure that new immigrants and families can live here, as I said. I also recognize that Bill 49 leaves open the possibility of funding for the settlement of NGOs, and that’s a good thing. But after 10 years of Liberal governments without an immigration policy, we need some detail and we need

some meat on the bones. Putting into the bill that they’re going to be funding NGOs for settlement services is great, but we need those details and we need that information.

Yes, Speaker, I would want to see some changes, some toughening up of the loopholes as they are currently existing that would have the potential to exempt some of the biggest recruitment and immigrant employment agencies that operate in the federal system from potentially having to register. As bigger employers they don’t necessarily have to register, and we need to toughen that up when we’re looking at having people come over here for economic opportunities.

In fact, there are laws on the books already that can protect against recruiters for foreign workers charging unfair recruitment fees—the 2009 Ontario Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act—but that same study found it lacks enforcement. That’s key: the enforcement and what that will look like. So it’s good that the study was there, Speaker, but, like we said, that study lacks enforcement.

0920

What’s to stop the worst offenders among immigration consultants who take fees from temporary farm workers and new arrivals from operating in Ontario? What are we doing to curb that—a proactive approach, actively engaged in doing that? In this bill, there’s not too much teeth to it. Again, it’s a lot of maze and regulations that we don’t know what it actually will take the form of. Right now in this legislation it’s not clear anything will. It’s not clear if some of the bigger recruitment agencies that operate federally will have to register, as it is now in this bill. I’d like to hear more detail from the minister on how these consultants will be made to opt into registering, and what will prevent them from operating if they don’t.

As with anything, there are some very hard-working consultants, but there has also been a lot of opportunism with consultants who have taken advantage of people who seek safety and opportunity here in this great province.

I’m glad that there are provisions for compliance and enforcement regimes in the bill, including inspection and investigation powers, offences and penalties for both individuals and organizations seen to abuse those simply looking to make a better life for themselves. But much of this, as written, is discretionary and left up to “the director”—again, not some real clear authority for the director to do this. We’d like to see specifics. I’d like to hear from the minister what that would look like in practice.

The reality is that there are many questions left about this bill, and concerns about it from those who represent, particularly, migrant or temporary foreign workers and other non-economic class immigrants to this province.

I have heard from migrant worker advocates that this bill hints at all the things we want but does them badly. Unless the loopholes around the registry of employment placement agencies are closed, little will change for the 90,000-plus foreign workers to Ontario, who can’t expect to be fast-tracked into permanent residency under the

federal legislation. The federal government's immigration policies will now make it harder, and it will take longer for most landed immigrants to become permanent residents.

The federal government's immigration policies are making it harder, and the federal government has been explicit that they mean to invite or recruit wealthy investors to immigrate. We need to make sure we have those laws or those requirements that they must register. But that isn't the majority of people who migrate to Canada, or Ontario. The people who do immigrate here expect to work very hard, and do work very hard indeed, to make life better for themselves and their families. We have a responsibility to them, as a province. The fact is that we need them here and many of them go out west.

This is an economic bill, a labour bill, and so New Democrats would like to see a requirement that there be coordination between the Ministries of Labour and Immigration. Really, we are promoting economic opportunities for newcomers, but where are the labour laws to support that? It's currently not in this bill. So why now? In fact, the federal government has signalled that they need the provinces to take more of a hand in setting economic immigration goals. This bill, in order to be able to do that, still needs the federal buy-in. Right now, the split between economic immigration and family settlement, which includes refugees, is essentially 50-50. I know this government would like the numbers of skilled economic immigration to go up as much as 75%.

As I mentioned earlier, New Democrats understand the need to bring along skilled economic newcomers. We have long supported recognizing foreign qualifications so that when someone migrates here looking for a better future and to offer the skills they already have, they will be able to. We talked about skilled worker shortages and then making it incredibly difficult for individuals who have these skills to use them once they immigrate here. If someone is a trained health professional they should be able to work in health care. If someone is an engineer or has an economic degree, or any number of other professions, they should be able to work in those professions.

I recently met a man in London who wrote to me and told me his story. I'd like to read that. This is what he wrote. He is an internationally trained professional in civil engineering, water resources. With more than 10 years' experience, he came to Canada in February 2011. He says:

"My goal is to find an employment relative to my field of study. Obtaining an engineering licence; i.e. a PEng, is one of the major steps for this type of employment. During the last four years, I tried my best to complete this step by evaluation of my credentials, passing professional practice exam (ethics and law—PPE) and approving my international experience. Having done this, the Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) has issued me a provisional licence which is only valid if I work under the supervision of a PEng.

"To get my regular engineering licence, I need to have a minimum of one year of Canadian engineering experi-

ence. It looks like not many employers are ready to offer the position without a licence, even if the person is ready to volunteer to get this experience. Public service employers also have only very limited positions for this purpose during the year. In other words, it is less likely many candidates like me can get these positions.

"I am sending you this email to let you know about the importance of the issue and hoping you (as our respected MPP) can address the problem in the higher level of the government to find a proper and immediate solution." This bill does not address the challenges facing newcomers who are highly trained immigrants to acquire the accreditation and/or the job experience they require in the field.

Speaker, as you can see, that is a true life story. I met this gentleman at an event in London. We were chatting, and I said, "Send me an email; put your thoughts in writing." I'm glad I had this opportunity to bring his perspective forward, because he's not the only one. We've all heard the stories of when you get in that taxicab and they talk a little bit about themselves, and you exchange a personal anecdote and they talk about how hard it is for their credentials to be recognized in Ontario. Some of them, I've heard they're promised that they're going to get a job—and that could be through those recruiters or those consultant agencies that promise a great life here—and once they get here their hopes and dreams are let down.

Another barrier I have heard about from constituents is about newcomers obtaining ID. That's becoming increasingly more difficult for them to do. We agree that people, of course, need ID in order to enjoy the full rights and services that ensure their well-being and to be able to contribute and participate. But if you don't have ID, that's a barrier to inclusion that should be addressed in the immigration bill. Currently, it's not.

Again, another example: A constituent of mine lost her record of landing. Service Canada will not provide a replacement of this document once it's lost; when it's gone, it's gone. The original—there's no way to replace it through Service Canada. What they will do is issue a verification status document which has all the same information, but Service Ontario doesn't accept the verification status document. That just seems like it's two governments not communicating. So you lose your record of landing—and sometimes people come over in a state, maybe they're leaving their country for reasons of conflict, and they may not have everything organized, or they've moved from one place to the next—that can happen to all of us, where we misplace documents. Service Canada is willing to give them verification status, but Service Ontario won't accept it.

This constituent in particular is a refugee, and she doesn't have a passport. She can't get her permanent resident card without some form of primary identification like an Ontario photo ID card. So we can see the Catch-22 here that people find themselves in, Speaker, and I don't see anything in this legislation that would actually facilitate making that a smoother process, a smoother transition.

0930

Two government ministries, on different levels—this is part of my recommendation—need to sit down at the table and figure out what documentation is acceptable if they're concerned about fraud on documents. They need to find systems within the system to help people. Bringing refugees here who can't access ID to have services just doesn't seem humane. It really doesn't.

Talking about examples brings me to a case that was recently here in Queen's Park. They went to the media studio with respect to a live-in caregiver. It was the Migrant Workers Alliance for Change. They came to the media studio to tell her story. Her name was Marites Angana. She started work as a live-in caregiver in Toronto in August 2014, not too long ago, and she died of a brain hemorrhage from a fall while at work in December of last year, so she was here about four months.

Domestic workers, many of whom are current or former live-in caregivers, are excluded from the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which provides health and safety protections to Ontario workers and triggers a Ministry of Labour investigation in the case of serious injury or death in the workplace. A Ministry of Labour investigation would uncover the causes of Marites's death to better prevent future workplace accidents.

On November 30, 2014, the federal government of Canada placed a cap on the number of caregivers who can access permanent residence each year and made the live-in requirement optional. However, caregivers' workplaces will continue to be their employers' homes, including those who remain domestic workers after receiving permanent residency status.

It wasn't widespread, but it was covered in the *Toronto Sun's* files, and I'll read from that article:

"The death of a caregiver in her employer's home has prompted calls for greater labour law and workplace insurance protection for domestic workers.

"Supporters of Marites Angana are trying to raise \$10,000 to send her body back to her 13-year-old son and parents in the Philippines.

"Liza Draman, of the Caregivers Action Centre, said Marites died of a brain hemorrhage on December 2 in a Toronto hospital, a few days after falling in her employer's garage.

"As family and friends of Marites Angana we cannot rest until we know what caused her death and prevent such tragedies from taking place again," Draman said Friday.

"The Ministry of Labour must broaden its investigations to include the deaths of any domestic workers on the job as it would regular workplace accidents, she said.

"Ernie Puguon, of the Ifugao Association of Canada, said Angana came from one of the poorest regions of the Philippines, and was the primary breadwinner for her family.

"Her father is a rice field worker, her mother is a housewife," said Puguon. 'She has a 13-year-old son in

grade 7, and is supporting the studies of her 19-year-old sister who is still in college.'

"Angana arrived in Canada only four months ago, brought by a recruitment agency to which she paid thousands of dollars, Puguon said.

"The association is appealing for financial help through the Thorncliffe Neighbourhood Office for the funds to provide a funeral and send her remains home to the Philippines, he said....

"A WSIB official contacted Puguon a few minutes prior to a media conference Friday to tell him that the case is being assessed to determine if Angana was entitled to any benefits."

It goes on a little bit more, but it just goes to show. This lady, Marites, was a working mom. She came to Ontario to try to support herself and her family, and had a tragedy happen. The Migrant Workers Alliance for Change is calling for some fairness under the Ontario Health and Safety Act. They're workers here in Ontario. We bring them here, but they're not good enough to be protected under that act. We have to look at that, Speaker. This government has to address those issues and concerns.

Speaker, these are some examples of various issues facing immigrants in Ontario. This government needs to do better on these issues so immigrants have the opportunity to succeed as well as provide health and safety protections to all who work in this province.

This bill is a very small start but I would like to see some changes. The changes that I would like to see, Speaker, are some of those recommendations that came from the expert study in 2012. When it goes to committee, I would love to hear the deputants' feedback on how to make this bill stronger and successful. If we want to increase the number of economic prospects coming to Ontario through newcomers, we need to make sure it's a positive experience and that when they're here, they're going to continue that economic prosperity.

I also wanted to talk about the Auditor General's report, because the Auditor General's report came after the bill was tabled, so I'm not sure if the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration actually took some of these suggestions and put them in the bill. When I read the bill over, it didn't appear to me that some of these things looked like they were going to be implemented as process. I'd like to read some of them to you.

Again, the Auditor General reinforces this: "As Ontario's population ages, the need for the province to attract skilled immigrants is likely to increase. A number of recent reports highlight that there is a shortage of skilled labour in Ontario. For instance, a report published by the Jobs and Prosperity Council in December 2012 noted that, despite Canada's strong education system and skilled population, there are still a number of sectors that report challenges recruiting workers with specific skill sets, especially in the skilled trades."

So there have been expert reports about this. It's nothing new. We need to retrain our workers here and we

need to bring in newcomers to fill these positions or we're going to be falling behind globally.

"The Ontario provincial nominee program is becoming more attractive to foreign nationals because, in February 2014, the federal government terminated both the Immigrant Investor Program for passive investors (that is, investors not actively involved in or managing the business), and the Immigrant Entrepreneur Program for experienced businesspeople from other countries who want to own and actively manage businesses in Canada."

By doing that, Speaker, this bill is, I think, a response to those two things that the federal government has done.

This is what the auditor has said: "During the course of our audit, we received a number of allegations about the program's operation and the risk that it was continuing to consider applications from individuals and organizations who were suspected to have been involved with immigration fraud and/or illegal immigration-linked investment schemes." That's where we need to tighten up this regulation piece: where we have the recruiters and the employers registered and licensed so that they're both responsible; they're both legally liable for what they do.

"In writing this report, we have included recommendations that address not only the issues raised during our value-for-money audit, but also those identified in the allegations. As well, the ministry, after recommendations from our office, formally referred certain case information to law enforcement in September 2014." Good on the auditor to find those holes and bring that to light.

It also says, "It also needs to track and measure how well people nominated in the past have in fact contributed to Ontario's economic development." It needs to do that. It needs to have that tracking process, setting targets and aspirations. If, at the end of those aspirations and targets, you don't see those results, then it's all for naught, all these plans that we make.

They said, "We also found that the ministry did not share program integrity concerns with both internal staff and external parties (law enforcement and regulators) who needed to know and could act on them accordingly. Furthermore, we found that program staff had not been provided with clear guidelines on how to deal with potentially fraudulent situations, and the program had not established anti-fraud mechanisms." So within their own ministry, Speaker, they need mechanisms and procedures to prevent that kind of fraud that takes advantage of newcomers and immigrants coming to our country. They need to do better in their own ministry.

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Here's another one: "Many program staff are temporary, and have received no written guidance or job training; turnover is high." If we're going to take this kind of initiative seriously and ask for higher newcomers and immigrants with economic opportunities to come to this province, we need to have properly trained staff who are going to review those applications and the program that's been set up.

Here's another one that the auditor says that they found here in their report: "The ministry used incomplete

information to assess program outcomes." You set up the program, you set up the act, but you're using incomplete information to assess the outcomes. We can't track something and know if it's working effectively if we don't have the outcomes assessed with the right tools.

Some of these revelations in this report I find kind of surprising; really, I do. This government and this ministry need to take this particular citizenship and immigration piece in Ontario seriously.

"The economic impact of nominating individuals without a job offer has not been assessed." That's the other piece, Speaker. Having a job offer is a stronger predictor of economic success than not having a job offer; that's pretty common sense. If you come to Canada and you don't have a job offer, you don't have a prospect of getting a job, you're not going to succeed. We all know that.

Then they talk about the impact of the current program design: "Majority of nominees selected had a post-graduate degree and no job offer, and their economic impact was not assessed"—again, failure after failure to follow through on what is happening with these newcomers once they come here, highly educated with credentials, high-skilled workers, yet there is no assessment of what the outcome is.

"In 2013, two thirds of nominees did not have a job offer. This appears contrary to the intent of the program, which is to select individuals who are likely to be an economic benefit to the province. The nominees without a job offer were primarily individuals with a master's or PhD degree from an Ontario university." That's shocking, too. And we know this. We know this because post-secondary students, when they graduate, are saying they're having a hard time finding work. We encourage international students to come to Ontario, but if we don't have those job prospects for them—it seems like a dismal future for anyone coming out of post-secondary education after spending years of study and financing their education and not being able to practise what they've learned.

I know that our member from London West yesterday reintroduced the work-integrated learning bill, which helps students who are graduating or need to graduate find internships. I hope that when this bill comes up for debate, this government will see fit to pass it on to committee, because the member from London West in her previous life was a researcher and she's very passionate about this bill that she introduced. Part of the bill she has put in there is the work-integrated learning piece. She introduced it last session and she reintroduced it yesterday. It's very important that when we have these educated international students in the province and they've got PhDs and master's degrees—where's the employment and where are the assessment tools to find out what the outcomes are, what happens after they get here and they can't find work? We should be tracking. Do they leave the province? Do they go back to their home country? What are they doing when that happens to them?

"The ministry has not adequately monitored whether nominees without job offers admitted to Ontario are eventually employed." That's what I'm saying now. Nobody monitors it. "Doing so could demonstrate whether nominating people who do not have job offers but have post-graduate degrees results in positive economic outcomes. The ministry had administered surveys in 2010 and 2013 to measure outcomes, but the surveys did not cover a large enough sample from this program component (less than 5% of all nominees without job offers responded to the survey)."

They did try, but the response was kind of abysmal.

Speaker, the other piece: "In 2010, cabinet instructed the ministry to introduce the master's stream only after an evaluation was completed on the PhD stream. However, the master's stream was introduced just two months after the PhD stream without an evaluation of the latter. The ministry stated that introducing the master's stream was a ministerial direction, but could not produce any formal authorization."

We are not doing that great of a job in this ministry providing economic opportunities when we're looking for newcomers coming here. We need to support employers who identify work gaps in our communities. I know Fanshawe College works very closely with the local business community to try to meet the demands of where employers are saying they're going with their businesses and what skills they need workers trained in. That's part of this whole picture when we have newcomers come to Canada: making sure that the economic opportunities that we say are here in Ontario actually come to realization for people.

In London we have a high employment rate, and it's been steady for quite a long time. If we don't do something about the need that employers are looking for when they say, "I need a specific skilled worker for this job"—we need to tie that in with our education system, our post-secondary education system. We need to tie that in with the immigration newcomers coming to Ontario. What is our workforce going to look like? We're going to be losing potential employers in Ontario if they can't meet the needs of the people they need to do the work for them.

High-tech jobs: That's something I've heard over and over again. That's a new part of a sector that's happening in employment. Manufacturing is still there—we still need our manufacturing—but tech jobs are the up-and-coming new industry that we're finding is happening.

There is a website that has some pilot funding that started in London. It's called WorkTrends. They're doing wonderful work with employers. They're actually identifying where employers are looking for job positions. You can go to their website and it will tell you what the job market is like. What they're trying to do is help people who are looking for a career in the future, to try to give them some insight as to what's coming in the future.

There's a lot of good work and agencies that are trying to bring the workforce up to a standard where we can match skilled workers with the job market that's avail-

able, but this government also needs to participate when it comes to the newcomers and the immigration piece. Inviting people to come here on the premise that they're going to have a job, and then we see in the Auditor General's report that's one of the things that is a problem, and then, again, it's not assessed, it's not monitored and it's not reported on—there is no success to your program if you can't show me the evidence. Show me the numbers. Show us the numbers. Show us the success rate.

When it goes to committee, I hope there are going to be some real changes. I know the government has a Liberal majority on committee, but they need to stop being so narrow-minded and selective when they hear these deputants. You need to open up your ideas. Be innovators.

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You want employers to innovate. You want employers to produce. You want them to research. They provide you a lot of that information already. In London, there's lots of research going on—that WorkTrends I was just talking about.

When people come to committee, don't be so rigid. Open up your mind to ideas that come forward. We hear that a lot. Young people's voices want to be heard in many new ideas across this province. They want to have some evolution to how things are done.

For example, my son said, "Mom, we've got to change this suit-and-tie way of doing business. People can work from home." He loves working on the cloud and Skype. He talks about having meetings on Skype. He gave me a strange suggestion—maybe it's my generation, but perhaps for his generation, things will change—and he's putting the idea out there. He said, "Mom, why do you have to go to Toronto and sit in the Legislature four days a week? Why don't you guys have electronic meetings? You can do the same business here in this house and you can be on the cloud or Skype." I said, "Oh, really? I never thought of that." He said, "Think of the money it would save."

The new generation that's coming up are high-tech; they're all on those electronic devices. They're all about ways of doing things differently. I'm not suggesting that we all be on the computer and we all sign in to Skype for a meeting. We were just having a chat, and he was thinking outside of the box. When young people talk about certain things, we have to think outside of the box.

Another idea he was telling me about—because he's surfing the Net and doing a lot of research: He said, "Mom, if you're travelling, you can actually go on a website and you can find people who will take you into their home for a night. It's way less expensive." I saw some problems with that. You don't know whose home you're going into.

But again, these are things that are out there that some of the younger generation are accepting as new ways of doing business. They're not stuck in the box, in the lines. They want to go outside the lines and think of new ways of how to get creative.

Speaker, I want to encourage the minister and the people who work for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to read this Auditor General's report. There are a lot of procedural suggestions in here that are extremely important for the success of the program that the Ontario Immigration Act has set forward. If they don't tighten up what they're doing in there, people are going to fall through the cracks. The results of these immigrants coming here and what their experiences are—we won't know what that will look like because the reports won't be done.

One other piece of information in the auditor's report said that there was never a procedural manual in seven years—if I could find it later, if anyone has a question, I can certainly look at it in detail—for people who work in the ministry. How do you expect people to do their job without some kind of guidelines or direction? That needs to be tightened up if this is going to be something we're going to take seriously in Ontario. It's long overdue, as the previous member from Beaches—East York, Michael Prue, pointed out. It's a long time coming that we've been waiting for legislation on immigration. If this is what the government is proposing, then let's get it right from the ministry perspective.

Let's get it right when we go to committee and we hear deputants. Let's not dismiss ideas that come forward right away, just because they don't fit in our little box. It doesn't mean you have to accept the whole premise of it, but you could take some things from it.

I was reading in the London Free Press this morning that a lot of schools are being closed in London, as they are throughout Ontario. What happened is, the city had purchased a particular school and now they're going to develop it into housing and some park area. They're going to repurpose that school. It's just not going to sit there abandoned. It was in the paper how this was a great, new idea of how to move with the times. The way things change, we have to change the way we do things as well. As a government, as a business and as families, we all have to go with that pace sometimes. Things are going to change.

I remember when we had bank machines and my dad refused to use a bank machine. Seniors had a really difficult time accepting that they would go and push these buttons and get money out of a machine. It was like, "Wow, this is just so forward-thinking and futuristic. Wow, look at this technology. We can get money out of a machine. You don't have to talk to the teller." My father refused to use it, and not that it's a bad thing. That's what he wanted to do. He still had the passbook. He'd go in all the time and get it updated.

But sometimes ideas limit us because it's a generational block. We, as leaders, have to think beyond those blocks, beyond our generation. Just because it's comfortable for us doesn't mean things shouldn't change. We need to get out of our comfort zone in many things when it comes to how we're growing Ontario. We've talked about that here, job prospects, the job ideas that we mentioned, and one of them is a good idea. It's attaching

funding, it's attaching government money to job creation. It's attaching government funding to resources produced in Ontario in processing plants, instead of just giving the money away. That's seen results. That's connected to actual evidence of success.

Speaker, I want to thank the members today for being here and listening to my contributions to Bill 49. I look forward to listening to more debate and for this to go to committee so that we can actually do the work.

I'm sure all members have had an opportunity to sit on committee. It's actually very fascinating to listen to the deputants. A lot of them are very passionate. They come up with very interesting perspectives from their backgrounds and what they do as advocates. It really opens your eyes to what's happening not just in these four walls but in your own constituency when you hear them—and then other cities around Ontario, and encouraging members to move out of their ridings when there's a committee and hear other constituents' concerns up north.

If you've never been up north, take the opportunity to do that. Go in the wintertime so you can experience the road conditions.

Mr. John Vanthof: Bring a coat.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Bring a snowsuit, a Ski-doo suit that you only see—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: And a shovel.

Interjection: And a snow shovel.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, and a shovel. Then you can have an appreciation. I had that appreciation. I went up to Sudbury last year. I was at Sault Ste. Marie as well. You have an appreciation when you hear members from the north talking about road conditions. Out in southwestern Ontario, we get all in a fluster when we can't get out of our driveways because the snow hasn't been plowed, and that's rightfully so. But imagine being up north and having those severe road conditions impeding you from getting out of your house. You might be a senior and you may have a medical appointment that's necessary.

Get out there, go to different ridings and get to understand the lay of the land and go when it's not the best time of year. Go when it's not a good time of year. Challenge yourself. Get out of your comfort zone. Put yourself in the place of people who have to pay those heating bills when it's so cold up north, those exorbitant hydro rates, and then maybe you can understand some of their plights.

That's what we're here for. We're supposed to listen and we're supposed to take action, but if we can't identify with some of those concerns—sometimes we can't really effectively understand those things that people come to committee and bring concerns. So going to those places up northeast—Timiskaming—Cochrane—John, what's the population of your riding?

1000

Mr. John Vanthof: Sixty thousand.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Sixty thousand? We should all go to John's riding and hear what farmers have to say.

Mr. John Vanthof: Seven hours, then five hours.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: There you go. That's a long drive, and we take it for granted.

We really need to make sure that we keep our minds open to what we're doing here, because if we start just looking at our four walls, in our box, we are not going to grow; we are not going to contribute positively to leadership. Challenge yourself. Get out of your comfort zone every day as a leader, so that you can keep your mind fresh and have perspectives that aren't the same old perspectives when it comes to looking at ideas for helping newcomers and immigrants in Canada fulfill what the act is promising.

I just want to say thank you, Speaker, for that opportunity, and I look forward to hearing what members' contributions are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'd like to thank the member opposite from London-Fanshawe for her comments. I'm glad to see that the NDP want to see this bill go forward and that they too agree that we need to control and support immigration in this great province of ours.

I'm proud that Ontario is the second province, after Quebec, to introduce its own immigration legislation. Our proposed legislation is a beginning, not an end. The Ontario Immigration Act will formally recognize the long history of immigration to Ontario and the important nation-building role it has played in forming Ontario's social, economic and cultural values. With this legislation, we are taking steps towards charting our own course when it comes to attracting more skilled immigrants to drive our economy and keep Ontario strong.

Equally important, the act will contribute to good governance by making sure that authority for Ontario's selection programs is clear and transparent. If passed, the act will strengthen our ongoing efforts to deter fraud and detect misrepresentation. The Ontario Immigration Act will increase transparency and information-sharing with our immigration partners. The act will allow Ontario to work more closely with the federal government on recruitment, selection and admission of skilled immigrants.

Everyone has a different recipe for economic success in Ontario. Immigration is a staple ingredient, along with great public education, skills training, infrastructure renewal and supporting a dynamic business climate.

In this way, our Ontario Immigration Act is part of the government's plan to invest in people and support the sectors that boost the economy and create jobs for all Ontarians. This bill is very important to Ontario's newcomers, just as it is for its employers. As such, Bill 49 is vitally important to Ontario. I look forward to further debate on this very important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's always a pleasure to listen to the member from London-Fanshawe. She points out

some of the issues with the Ontario Immigration Act, Bill 49. We are supporting it. We need some changes in it.

I think the biggest attractor to Ontario—our province used to always lead this country in immigration because it was a place where you'd come to get a job. Now we're not seeing that. Actually, we see the other provinces pulling ahead in their quest for skilled trades and skilled immigrants. It's unfortunate because if we want to get back up to number one, we're going to have to do something to get our economy going, and we're not seeing that. Over the last 10 years, our economy has shrunk in relation to the rest of North America.

But there's no secret to what's happening here: It's the cost of doing business. It's so high in this province that we're chasing our employers away. Places like Michigan and New York state—their best economic development officers are actually up here in Canada. They work right in this building, on the other side of this House, as they raise all the payroll taxes that we talk about. Now they're considering another carbon tax, and we're seeing the exodus of business increasing at a rate that's hard to believe.

We have to get back to being a place where employers can feel confident that there's a future for them, confident so that they can actually invest in Ontario, invest in their employees and get a return. If we get to that point, we'll likely see ourselves come back up in our ability to attract good, qualified immigrants that really are the backbone of this province.

We look forward to making some changes. The federal government has forced the hand of the province to do something, so this is their response. I'm looking forward to more debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to stand and compliment the member from London-Fanshawe on her comprehensive report on this bill.

Our province was built on immigration. I know in my community of Windsor—I believe we're the fourth most diverse community in Canada. A lot of our growth is from people who immigrate to Ontario. We have the Carrousel of the Nations, a wonderful festival. The multicultural council is very, very active in our community.

Let me say, to our Chinese Canadians: Gong Hay Fat Choy; Happy Chinese New Year.

To the member from Davenport, who I believe is either the daughter or granddaughter of immigrants—and I believe she speaks four or five languages. This is how our communities get enriched, how we grow, how the fabric of our culture is enhanced: through immigration.

The member from London-Fanshawe talked about problems with an immigrant having photo ID. I just went through that with my mother, who turned 91 in December. She still lives alone in Newfoundland and still drives. Her driver's licence expired before she left to come up here, and that is the only photo ID that she had. At the ticket counter, when I was flying her to Ottawa on her way back to Newfoundland, she said, "This has expired. You need photo ID." Well, when you're 91 years old,

you don't have a lot of photo ID. She did have her birth certificate, and she did have her social insurance number, so we got her on the plane.

But what is going to happen to a lot of our older people? We're changing the health cards, but a lot of them are still red and white, and they don't have a photo on them. If you don't have a passport, what do you have for photo ID?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this morning in support of Bill 49. I'm very pleased to hear my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh wish me and my colleagues and everyone celebrating lunar new year a happy new year. That's the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

With regard to this proposed bill, the Ontario Immigration Act strengthens the ongoing efforts to make sure highly skilled immigrants can work in their sector of expertise, especially in the health care sector. That's stated clearly in the bill, Mr. Speaker. The bill is called An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

As a former registered nurse, I'm very pleased to see that, if passed, the legislation would amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, RHPA, so that regulations and requirements in relation to professions like nurses, doctors and dentists align with those in the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act.

This act will also require transparency, objective—and decisions must be made in a timely manner. All of us in this Legislature have met somebody who has been trained overseas as a nurse, doctor or dentist but has not been qualified to work in the province of Ontario. If this legislation is passed, it will allow a more timely response from our regulatory body.

This measure is in line with our commitment to increase the number of immigrants licensed in their respective professions. One of the goals of the immigration strategy is to increase the number of skilled immigrants who are able to find work in their field and to increase the percentage of internationally trained professionals who are licensed in this province.

Mr. Speaker, just last night, I spent some time talking to former colleagues in Scarborough. They're telling us that this is a big problem, and we need to pass this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for London—Fanshawe has two minutes.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the members from Davenport, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Windsor—Tecumseh—always a pleasure—and Scarborough—Agincourt. The way we went around the room here, the Legislature, people talked about how there are a lot of immigrants, and a lot of us have immigrant roots. Somehow, other than the aboriginal population, we've all come here as newcomers or immigrants. Many of us have built our lives successfully, worked hard. I'm second generation to Ontario. I know the member from Davenport

said that she came here as an immigrant too. So we know some of those struggles.

This bill is a step in the right direction by having people come here who are highly skilled, and health professionals, as the member from Scarborough—Agincourt pointed out. There are good steps in there that are moving us forward, but we need to make sure, as we make those steps, that we have the support services and the jobs that we're promising in those fields for those educated professionals and skilled workers—that they translate when they get here—and then tracking that, having some kind of system where you find out how that success translated for that newcomer. Because if you can see where it's working, then you know that you've accomplished what you set out to do. But that doesn't mean you can't improve it. Once something is working, you can't just sit back and say, "Yes, that's working great." There are always things that change, and that's what I was trying to say earlier: Bills are virtual. As things change, as time changes, we need to make sure that we're up on that so we can see things out to the finish line.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1011 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Laurie Scott: On behalf of Christine Elliott, the MPP for Whitby—Oshawa—the page captain today, Riley Eaton, is from her riding. I'd like to introduce her parents, Teresa and Chris Eaton, from Whitby. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my great delight to introduce my intern, who I'm about to lose in a week—my loss will be somebody across the aisle's gain: Kristen Neagle.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to introduce Setimo Eneriko, who is a Ryerson University student volunteering in my office on an exciting community project; and my legislative assistant Dave Bellmore. Welcome to the House.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I just want to add one addendum to what Laurie Scott mentioned about Riley Eaton's parents. Teresa Eaton was actually a page here in the 32nd Parliament, but I'm not asking how old she is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome, and congratulations.

The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would like to welcome somebody to the Legislature who has been the mayor of Sioux Lookout, the mayor of Cochrane and the former chairman of Mushkegowuk Council, now the Grand Chief of Mushkegowuk Council: Lawrence Martin. Welcome.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to introduce page Niko Hoogeveen's mother, Dr. Kelly Emerson Hoogeveen; grandmother Ann Hoogeveen; and grandfather Harry

Hoogveen. They're in the members' gallery this morning.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce two friends in the gallery today: Ahsan Irfan and Brian Thilagarajah.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It is with great pleasure today that I introduce my daughter, Monica Granados, who is sitting in the gallery today with me. C'est un plaisir.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I know we all find it challenging running our small businesses at our Queen's Park office and our constituency office. I want to welcome, on her first day at Queen's Park, my new assistant, Chana Weinstein. Thank you, Chana.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to welcome to the gallery today Mike Bloxam and Maggie Whalley from London, who are here with the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario. Welcome.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to welcome here to the Legislature today the grades 4 and 5 students from Dovercourt Public School and their teachers, Mr. Fulton and Mr. Toale. Welcome.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to introduce, in the west members' gallery, members from the Canada youth delegation that I met with this morning: Anthony, Leah, Kathleen and Christian. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I am becoming a woman of a certain age, but if my eyes are not mistaken, there is a woman from my community named Diane Dent here in the gallery.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'd like to add to the introduction that the member for Timmins—James Bay gave of Grand Chief Lawrence Martin. Not only is he the Grand Chief of Mushkegowuk tribal council and the former mayor of the communities of Cochrane and Sioux Lookout—may I say the only person to ever be the mayor of two different communities—but also Grand Chief Martin is a Juno Award-winning musician from 1994 and has a new album out called Train of Life. Grand Chief Martin, please stand up. Go out and buy the album.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to introduce two guests from Laurier university who are here today, invited to participate and look at what's going on here at Queen's Park. They asked to come. We have both Aron and Eric who are here. Please take a bow.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to also welcome members from the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to welcome back former page Amber Bowes from Oshawa and her mother, Katherine Bowes. They are in the public gallery this morning.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm like the leader of the third party. If my eyes do not deceive me, one of my constituents, Susan Ratcliffe—I was thinking, what on earth is she doing in the gallery? Then the minister helpfully explained that she's with the Architectural Conservancy. Welcome.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): At this time I would like our pages to assemble to be introduced to the House, this new group of pages. They may have trouble setting the record if they're not quicker here.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Tricking in, like members coming in the House in the morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They seem to be doing so with a little more vigour.

From Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Dhairya Bhatt; from Oshawa, Amber Bowes; from Halton, Vaughn Courage; from Northumberland—Quinte West, Julie Darling; from Whitby—Oshawa, Riley Eaton; from Barrie, Niko Hoogveen; from Scarborough—Guildwood, Fardin Islam; from Eglinton—Lawrence, Arlyne James; from Scarborough—Agincourt, Andrew Liu; from London West, Muntder Madlol; from Mississauga South, Natalie McLean; from York—Simcoe, Madison Mote; from Pickering—Scarborough East, Ali Rizvi; from Etobicoke North, Ishani Sharma; from Markham—Unionville, Victoria Soltan; from Simcoe North, Rachel Stong; from Kitchener Centre, William Stuart; from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Morgan Tamminga; from Mississauga—Streetsville, Hannah Tang; from Toronto Centre, Inaya Yousaf; from Oak Ridges—Markham, Eileen Zhang. These are our pages for this round. Thank you. Now get to work.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CURRICULUM

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. On November 18 in this House, you affirmed that your government had established a process to consult with parents on proposed changes to the Liberal sex education curriculum, but over the past three months I have heard from thousands of parents from across Ontario who have told me that no such consultation took place and that the period for consultation is now over.

Premier, why did you suggest to this House that you expected the chairs of each school council to consult with parents on the sex ed curriculum when this was, by the order of your Minister of Education, never going to happen?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me just be clear: We were, and the Minister of Education was, very clear that all of the schools in the province, all 5,000 schools—the school council chairs—were being asked to take part in a consultation. That means that every region of the province, every school, every school council chair, had access to the consultation process. That is exactly what happened. We have completed that process.

1040

The fact is that the health and physical education curriculum is out of date. In fact, it's dangerously out of date, Mr. Speaker. Children in our society need the informa-

tion that is contained in an up-to-date health and physical education curriculum. They are going to get information somewhere. We want to make sure they get the right information and that they get information that is based on evidence.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: You clearly stated that “the role of a school council chair is to talk to the people in his or her school, to get that input and then to feed that input into a process.” Yet, Premier, the survey itself says, “to support the quality and integrity of the data collected from parent representatives, we strongly encourage parent representatives to complete the survey independently”; that is, Premier, without consulting parents.

Premier, when you stood here and said you expected school council chairs to conduct consultations, consultations the Liberal Party promised back in 2010, were you aware that your Minister of Education was working against a proper consultative process?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me just say that I think 5,000 parents who are informed parents, who are connected to their school communities—and I don’t know if the member opposite has ever been a school council chair. I have, and I know that when you’re a school council chair, you’re in touch with your community. You hear from your community. You know what your community is about and you have conversations with your community. Five thousand parents from around this province, from every region of this province, from every school had access to this process.

But I guess for me the real issue is that this health and physical education curriculum that is in place in Ontario right now dates back to 1998. We need to have this curriculum updated. We engaged in a consultation. We’re behind jurisdictions like British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and the update has to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex will come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Well, back to the Premier: Premier, I can only conclude that when you stood up in this House and defended this so-called process, you simply had no idea what the actual process was that your Minister of Education had established, perhaps, Premier, much in the same way that Dalton McGuinty had no idea about the new sex ed agenda his Minister of Education and her officials had planned back in 2010.

Enough of the secrecy, Premier. Enough of defending a process that doesn’t even exist. When are you going to start respecting the role of all parents in the education of their children?

Premier, when do you plan on releasing the proposed new curriculum to all Ontario parents so that the real consultation process can begin?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The curriculum will be posted on the Ministry of Education website for all to see within weeks. Later this winter it will be posted, Mr. Speaker, and it will be rolled out in classrooms in September 2015. The fact is that the curriculum we have in place in Ontario is out of date. We need to have it updated.

I’m not sure what the real agenda of the member opposite is. I’m not sure if the fear-mongering has more to do with his leadership campaign or whether it has to do with a very small group of people who want to stir up fear about the reality that kids need information. They need to understand how human beings relate to each other and they need to get that information based on science. That’s what the curriculum will do, and it will be available very shortly on the website.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My second set of questions is also for the Premier, regarding an ongoing criminal investigation into the conduct of her officials.

Premier, the Sudbury by-election was quickly called for mid-winter. You ignored what your own local party members had to say and appointed your candidate.

Premier, as you know, the OPP have noted their belief that the Liberals broke the law by attempting to lure a potential candidate with a government or political job. Premier, something stinks here. Ontario residents deserve to know what inducements were offered to keep Mr. Olivier out of the Sudbury by-election race.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, as I have said repeatedly in this House and elsewhere, any suggestion that anything was offered in exchange for any action is simply false. The reality is that I had made a decision. I had made a decision to appoint a candidate, to appoint Glenn Thibeault as our candidate in Sudbury. He is going to be and is a wonderful MPP.

Having made that decision, there were conversations with the former candidate, the past candidate, to try to keep him involved in the party. That was the initiative, because I believe, as I have said, that it is important to keep people involved when they have taken part in an election, when they have been part of a party process. So we reached out to him to try to keep him involved. The fact is that the decision was made to appoint a candidate and the initiative was to keep him involved in the party.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Premier, you can continue to dance around this issue or you can use the time to come clean with the people of Ontario.

There can be no doubt that your deputy chief of staff went to Sudbury with the intent of influencing Mr. Olivier and inducing him not to join the race. In fact, the OPP have investigated and they’re of the belief that the

law was broken when a government or political job was offered.

Premier, what exactly did you or your staff or the Ontario Liberal Party offer to Mr. Olivier to step aside?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think this is an interesting issue and I think it is acknowledged that all parties do work to keep former candidates—

Mr. Steve Clark: Minister of whitewash.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. If I was absolutely sure of what somebody said, I would ask them to withdraw, but I'm not 100% sure. I think he gets my message.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think Ontarians actually expect more of their elected leaders than the politics of personal destruction. Both the opposition parties have appointed candidates in elections. Both the Tories and the NDP have sought to keep past candidates involved.

I guess I have a question back: If you think back to January 2009, the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock—and it might just be a coincidence, but on the very same day as she resigned her seat—

Mr. John Yakabuski: There was more to this than what you're saying. There were inducements offered.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: OPP investigator Detective Erin Thomas says: "I believe the words spoken by both Loughheed and Sorbara to Olivier assists me in my belief the Criminal Code offence has been committed." Premier, in fact, your government and your party are under three different OPP police investigations.

Premier, are you saying that you had, personally, no conversations with Ms. Sorbara or Mr. Loughheed about Andrew Olivier and the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I was saying, on the very same day in January 2009, the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock resigned her seat so the new leader could win and was given a paid job the very same day.

The Sudbury Star, January 10, 2009, said:

"Scott Trades Seat for Head Office Job.

"Progressive Conservative Laurie Scott was given the job Friday of getting the opposition party ready for the next election in exchange for giving up her seat in the Ontario Legislature."

The Peterborough Examiner said: "In exchange for giving up her seat, Tory said Scott is taking on the 'enormous responsibility' of election readiness chairwoman for the party."

Speaker, the record speaks for itself.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Kitchener-Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. When we asked you yesterday about—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was the wrong rotation.

The leader of the third party.

1050

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. The Premier promised that she was going to clean up corruption and cover-ups after 10 years of Liberal scandal, when she came into office. She claimed that she was going to lead the most open and the most transparent government in Canada.

But the report from the gas plants committee shows that not a lot has changed. The gas plants scandal started with a cover-up, and the report is an attempt to cover up the cover-up.

Let's be honest: Covering up isn't the same thing as cleaning up. So my question to the Premier is, will she stop trying to cover up her scandals—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I was quite lenient up to that point. The member is accusing another member. Please withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very glad that the justice committee has completed its report. The report is clear on a number of points. The report is clear that the large-scale energy siting process—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville will come to order—second time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It happens all the time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, come to order—second time.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That doesn't happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And if you continue, it will be a third time, and the last.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy is not helping.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There were a number of findings that I think make it clear that the work of the committee really did unveil some of the challenges that we were confronting. The large-scale energy siting process failed. The costs were unacceptably high, record-keeping was inadequate, and new rules were needed for the minister—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Todd Smith: Withdraw, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —new rules were needed for the minister's office staff.

The fact is that there are 16 recommendations that are designed to improve the siting process and improve records retention. Those recommendations are very important, and I'm glad that we've got them as a result of the committee's work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There is something seriously wrong when the Premier's office is trying to distract people from a criminal investigation into a bribery scandal in Sudbury with a billion-dollar gas plant scandal and its criminal investigation.

Politicians owe it to the people of this province to do much better. Using one scandal with a criminal investigation to distract from another scandal and criminal investigation is pretty darned cynical.

When will this Premier take the responsibility seriously, clean up her government, clean up her office, and clean up her party so we can start getting into the issues that really matter to the people of this province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The fact is, two and a half years of work that this committee did—there were over 400,000 pages of documentation that were looked at; there were 93 witnesses that came forward. As the process rolled out, we worked to change some of the rules that we knew needed to be changed, to change the siting process, to change the rules around document retention.

Now we have the recommendations of the committee, and there are further recommendations there that we can follow. The fact is, there were 16 recommendations that came out of the committee's work. The NDP, to their credit, actually put some recommendations in their minority report. Strangely, the opposition, the Conservatives, had no recommendations except to continue to meet.

The fact is, we have those recommendations. We will follow them, and we appreciate the work that all the committee members did.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fact is named Peter Faist. That's what the fact is that these Liberals will not let come into this House.

This Premier, though, insists—in fact, she kept insisting that she was going to be so different and she was going to clean things up around here. Yesterday, she stood up in this House to protect her deputy chief of staff, whose actions are part of a criminal investigation by the OPP in the Sudbury by-election.

The gas plant report shows that the Premier protected Dalton McGuinty's deputy chief of staff, whose actions are part of a breach-of-trust investigation by the OPP.

The Premier said she was going to be different. So why is the Premier doing the same things all over again?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I came into this office, I said clearly that we would open up the process around the committee. We did that. That's why the com-

mittee met for two and a half years. That's why there were 93 witnesses and 400,000 documents that were read.

I said that we would get to report-writing once the election was over. The NDP decided on the timing of the election. They decided when the election was going to be. We went through the election. We were clear that we were going to have report-writing. That report-writing has happened. We have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Finished?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. The Liberal gas plant report claims that the blowing of \$1.1 billion came down to "inadequacies of record-keeping and document retention policies and training." As my friend Peter Kormos would have said, bullspit. Liberals deleted emails and they got caught—end of.

Yesterday, the Premier said there was "no specific offer" made to Mr. Olivier. I call bullspit again on that, Speaker. The Liberals told Olivier, "Name your price," and they got caught.

The Premier tried to cover up the gas plant cover-up. Will she come clean with the Sudbury by-election scandal or will we just see more cover-ups?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

I'm trying my best to ensure that I'm listening very carefully to all questions and all answers. I'm going to ask temperance when it comes to language and to try to bring it to a decorum here that allows us to go without having to be called to order. I'm not doing that right now, but all I'm asking for is a little temperance when we deliver our questions and answers.

Please?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

On the second part of the leader's question, in terms of the Sudbury by-election, I've been very clear. I've answered that question a number of times in terms of having made a decision to appoint a candidate and then working to keep a past candidate involved.

Let me go to the first part of the question, which was about the report of the justice committee. Regarding the cost of the relocations, the opening of the report says, "it is clear that the cost was unacceptably high." I agree with that. Regarding local input, the report says, "It is clear that communities have not been sufficiently engaged in the large-scale energy siting process." I agree with that. The report and the Information and Privacy Commissioner said, "not enough was done to ensure that ministers'

and Premier's office staff were aware of their record retention responsibilities." I agree, Mr. Speaker.

The fact is, those recommendations that flow out of those insights are very important. We have taken action on many of them, and we will take all of them very seriously.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, there is an old saying that you're entitled to your own opinion, but you're not entitled to your own facts. Ontarians deserve the facts.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Why don't you live by that saying?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Economic Development, come to order a second time.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Who made the decision to offer a job—any job—to Andrew Olivier so that he would stop seeking the Liberal nomination in Sudbury? Who did that, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The characterization that was just expressed of what happened in Sudbury is simply not the case. That is not what happened. Here's what happened: I made a decision as the leader of the Liberal Party—it is my prerogative, and I made a decision to appoint a candidate in Sudbury. That candidate was Glenn Thibeault. Having made that decision—

Applause.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: People, I'm not finished here.

Having made that decision, there were attempts to keep a young man who had run for us in the previous election—to keep that young man involved. There were no specific commitments. There were no specific offers. There were offers and suggestions about what he might consider in order to stay involved. I would expect any leader in this House to work to keep someone involved who had run for them in a previous election.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier keeps insisting that there was no offer made to Andrew Olivier. There was, Speaker. Pat Sorbara offered him "a full-time or part-time job at a (constituency) office" or "appointments to boards or commissions." The Premier keeps insisting that she'd already made up her mind to appoint her candidate, but Pat Sorbara told Andrew Olivier that the Premier was in fact weighing her options.

1100

We are confronted with two versions of the truth: Pat Sorbara's and Gerry Lougheed's version, and the Premier's version. It's apparent that somebody here is not being quite truthful. Through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask the Premier: Who is it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The conversation to which the leader of the third party refers is a conversation that took place after I had already had a conversation with the former candidate about the fact that I was going to appoint a candidate, and that candidate was not going to be him.

The attempts to keep him involved were just that: They were suggestions about things that he might apply for, that he might consider in order to stay involved, just as I expect that the leader of the third party had conversations with Jonah Schein and Paul Ferreira about keeping them involved when they failed to win their seats back. I expect that she had similar conversations.

That was the conversation I had with Andrew Olivier. That was the conversation that Pat Sorbara had. I expect—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, when we asked you yesterday about allegations that you, and specifically your deputy chief of staff, offered taxpayer-funded positions in return for a political favour, you told us that you were only working to keep the candidate involved in the party—eight separate times. Premier, isn't this just code for getting Andrew to step aside, endorse Glenn, shut up and obey?

Premier, can you tell Ontarians whether it was the full-time job in the constituency office, the part-time job in the constituency office, or the government appointments to boards or commissions that you and your deputy were offering to keep Mr. Olivier involved with the Liberal Party?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said a number of times, the conversations that took place about keeping the former candidate involved were conversations in the context of a decision having been made about an appointment. The fact is that the authority that I have as the leader of the Liberal Party is an authority that comes from the party. We have a constitution. The constitution allows me to appoint a candidate.

The fact is, I had made that decision that I was going to appoint a candidate. That candidate was going to be Glenn Thibeault, so there was no question of who the candidate was going to be. The only question was whether the past candidate wanted to stay involved in the party in any way. That's what the conversations were about.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: The Premier can BS us all she wants in this House, but—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw, please.

Mr. Michael Harris: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I have now made a decision in my mind. I will not accept that term, because what you cannot say indirectly, you will not say directly, and it impugns that.

Please finish.

Mr. Michael Harris: Sitting across from the OPP, she'd better start telling the truth.

Premier, you said you'd be different. You said you were committed to accountability, committed to transparency. Today you lead a government under the cloud of three separate OPP investigations—a record, Premier.

Your deputy chief of staff is clearly heard on tape, clearly understood by people across Ontario to be offering a taxpayer-funded job to Mr. Olivier.

Premier, you say the duties of the deputy chief of staff are separate from the ongoing investigation, but that's just the point. Your deputy crossed that line the moment she offered Mr. Olivier a government job.

Premier, tell your "never retreat, never explain, never apologize" deputy chief of staff to resign today.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, let's just go over what happened. The fact is that I made a decision to appoint a candidate in the Sudbury by-election. Having made that decision, there was an attempt to keep a young man who had run for the party involved.

As I suspect, I hope that someone over there is going to be talking to Paula Peroni and hoping that she might stay involved in the party. Or maybe you just cut her loose.

What we want to do on this side is keep people involved. Glenn Thibeault was going to be the candidate. The attempts to reach out to the past—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question, Speaker, is to the Premier. When did the Premier decide she was going to skip an open nomination process in Sudbury and appoint her candidate from a boardroom here in Toronto?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I go back to my comments earlier about the fact that we have a constitution in the Liberal Party that gives the authority to the leader to appoint a certain number of candidates. That's part of the decision of the party. I have that authority and I made that decision in this case. Because we had the possibility of having Glenn Thibeault as our candidate, I made the decision that I would make that appointment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, Speaker, to the Premier: That's not what the facts show. When Pat Sorbara called Andrew Olivier on December 12, she said to Andrew Olivier the following: "force the Premier to move to the appointment process if that's the only option...." That was the quote. She said—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Two things: Number one, the dialogue that's going on between members of the two caucuses at the back will stop.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I bring order to the House, sir.

And the second thing is, let's try to tie this into government business, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, when Pat Sorbara called Andrew Olivier on December 12, she said to Andrew Olivier, his actions would, "force the Premier to move to the appointment process if that's the only option avail-

able." She said to Andrew, "you've been ... asked by the leader and the Premier to make a decision to step aside to allow Glenn to have the ... opportunity uncontested."

So the question is that there are two stories here. The Premier claims she made up her mind previously, but the facts in regard—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me, your time is up.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think it's time to kind of step back and think about the decision the Premier made to appoint a candidate, an extremely fine candidate who has served the community of Sudbury very, very well over the past six years as an MP.

The Liberal Party of Ontario has a constitution that gives the leader the right to appoint candidates. She exercised that right because Glenn Thibeault, although he did represent a different party—I know that's a sore point for the party opposite—he represented his community extremely well. We have brought that into our caucus, into our government, into this Legislature.

The focus of the party opposite on this personal destruction—and it's not just as the House came back, the whole campaign they ran was based on destruction of an individual. We're proud of our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

POVERTY

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is to the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. In September, you launched Ontario's second Poverty Reduction Strategy, Realizing Our Potential.

Building on the successes of our government's first strategy, Breaking the Cycle, released in 2008, the new strategy contains many measures to fight poverty, including expanding health benefits and nutrition programs for children in low-income families, creating a local poverty reduction fund to support organizations that achieve outcomes for people, and reducing child poverty by 25%.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to see the new strategy sets the bold, long-term goal of ending homelessness in Ontario, a goal that the minister shares with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Through you to the minister responsible for our Poverty Reduction Strategy: Can you please give this House an update on what our government is doing to reach our goal of ending homelessness?

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the honourable member for this very important question, Speaker. As the member mentioned, our new Poverty Reduction Strategy sets the long-term goal of ending homelessness in Ontario. It's the right thing to do and it's the smart thing to do, because having a place to call home gives people a stable foundation from which they can build their lives back up again and rise out of poverty.

Currently, there is no consistent definition of homelessness. We have no consistent methods for counting the number of people who are homeless in Ontario, but we do know that we have a problem, and we are determined to resolve that problem. We need expert advice, and that's why we've announced a new Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness, shared jointly between the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and myself. They're going to give us practical, actionable advice and expertise to help us define and move forward on this very important commitment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you to the minister for her answer. In addition to her work on the file, I know that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been instrumental in the fight against homelessness in Ontario. Commitments in the new Poverty Reduction Strategy, such as the \$42-million increase to the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative and the \$16 million for 1,000 new supportive housing spaces for Ontarians living with mental health and addiction issues, demonstrate that we are already making strides when it comes to reducing homelessness. The Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness is the next logical step in crafting an evidence-based approach to achieving our long-term goal of ending homelessness.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy: Can you please give my constituents and this House more information about the panel?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thank you to both the honourable member and the minister responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy. As the minister mentioned, the creation of the new Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness means that our government will, in fact, have the tools it needs to pursue an evidence-based approach to eliminating homelessness in Ontario.

The panel consists of 13 members who reflect Ontario's geographic diversity and have a wide range of experience and expertise, including people with lived experience of homelessness, people with expertise in aboriginal youth homelessness, people with technical expertise in homelessness data and measurement, people with subject matter knowledge and expertise, and people with knowledge of the current Ontario practices in measuring homelessness locally.

The panel will also engage additional experts and groups, such as youth, newcomers, seniors, aboriginal people and the LGBTTQ community.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday was another sad chapter in the ongoing saga of the gas plant scandal and the Liberal Party's coordinated efforts to delete emails and wipe hard drives with the tabling of your whitewashed, sanitized report by your committee.

Late last year, under cover of darkness—Christmas break and darkness—it was announced that the Liberal Party would repay the \$10,000 that the government had paid Peter Faist to destroy hard drives and delete emails in your office.

Premier, Peter Faist is the boyfriend of the former deputy chief of staff who is now under a cloud of darkness for giving false testimony to the committee. This is further evidence that taxpayers' money was used inappropriately by your Liberal government and another example of your lack of leadership. Will you commit to restrike the gas plant committee so that we can finish the job of getting to the bottom of your scandal?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, we are glad that the justice committee has completed its work. I want to thank all the members of the justice committee, who have done tremendous work over the last three years in making sure that we get good information as to how decisions were made around the gas plants. Speaker, as you are aware, the gas plant committee has listened to about 93 witnesses, some of them multiple times. They received almost half a million pages of documents, including about 30,000 pages of documents from the Premier's office. As a result of all that work and deliberation, they have provided a critical assessment of government record-keeping practices and the way in which large energy projects are sited. We look forward to evaluating and implementing those recommendations provided.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, I could say that that was a shiftless response but I'll say it was a responseless shift. It brings up three words. It could be summed up in three words: failure of leadership.

Let's be honest with what this cheque from the Liberal Party was all about. Your party paid Peter Faist, the boyfriend of Laura Miller, former deputy chief of staff, to eliminate evidence in a criminal investigation and destroy property belonging to the people of Ontario, and to prevent this House and the OPP from getting to the bottom of your gas plant scandal.

The report submitted yesterday changes nothing. This is not over. Through the power of your majority, you

forced the committee to produce an incomplete report. Will you commit to re-striking the committee and allow us to investigate and question Laura Miller, Peter Faist and David Livingston, the key players in this scandalous cover-up?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Start the clock. The member for Stormont will come to order. The member from Renfrew—I have to say it—will withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. We should let the OPP do their job. Our job is to make sure that we look at the 16 substantive recommendations that have been provided by the justice committee and make sure that we implement those recommendations.

I'm glad to see that there are some really important recommendations that are provided in this report regarding the cost of the relocations and making sure that we have extensive and substantive engagement with communities where large infrastructure projects are planned to be sited and better record-keeping practices.

We have been working, over the last couple of years under the leadership of this Premier, in making sure that we're making all the necessary changes in terms of better staff training for mandatory record-keeping training and in passing an accountability act which has stiffer penalties around deletion of records. I'm actually very sad to see that the opposition parties provided no substantive recommendations after the incredible amount of work that was done in this matter.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, can you confirm whether you directed Pat Sorbara to offer Andrew Olivier a full-time or a part-time job at a constituency office or appointments to boards or commissions, and are those job offers still on the table for Mr. Olivier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Premier has, on several occasions, discussed this particular issue.

I did this yesterday and I'm going to do it again today because I have a feeling that not everybody was really paying attention to understand what a fine new colleague we have in this Legislature. We offer our congratulations. It is the tradition of this House that a new MPP, regardless of whether they're on your side or someone else's side, is given the courtesy of respect and congratulations.

Who is Glenn Thibeault? Who is this all about? Well, throughout his career he has shown an unwavering commitment to a better, fairer Sudbury. I have a feeling that the member from Nickel Belt knows better than most of us the contribution that our new member has made to Sudbury. He has fought tirelessly—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Back to the Premier: When Gerry Loughheed spoke to Andrew Olivier, he began the conversation by saying, "I come to you on behalf of the Premier."

Premier, can you confirm that you authorized Gerry Loughheed to make offers to Andrew Olivier on your behalf?

1120

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what we're witnessing is the same negativity that voters have rejected. Voters have rejected the kind of negativity that we are seeing expressed in this House today. The by-election campaign that was run by the NDP—and, apparently, the PCs, to the extent that they ran a campaign—the negativity was rejected.

The people of Sudbury made a decision. They made a very good decision. They made a decision where all of the information was presented to them. The public has said that they demand more. They reject the negativity of the opposition, and they elected someone who will make a positive contribution to the lives of people in Sudbury.

Glenn Thibeault, the member from Sudbury, has a very strong and positive record in driving change. We welcome him and look forward to the contribution he will make here in the Legislature.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

New question.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time and poses a threat to our infrastructure, food supply, drinking water and our economic competitiveness.

But climate change is a problem with a solution. While the opposition has refused to put forward meaningful solutions to this challenge, our government has taken action, closing Ontario's coal plants, curbing the use of cosmetic pesticides and protecting 1.8 million acres of land with the greenbelt. These initiatives have resulted in fewer smog days and cleaner water for all Ontarians.

I was pleased to see last week that the minister has launched a climate change discussion paper and invited Ontarians, businesses and communities to share their thoughts on how we can best combat climate change while continuing to grow our economy.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change inform this House about the nature of his discussion paper and the consultations with Ontarians?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's particularly helpful to have people like the member from Cambridge, who is a nurse, who understands the health implications for families—Lyme disease—and it's great to have such a

champion in the House who understands the dimensions of this.

The Premier and I and the Minister of Natural Resources, the Minister of Infrastructure, the Minister of Economic Development, the Minister of Health—our entire cabinet, Mr. Speaker, our entire caucus understands that the biggest, most important issue we're facing for our families and our children is climate change. We are fast-tracking to a four-degree mean temperature change on this planet in the latter half of this century. That is the biggest challenge we, as human beings, have faced in our entire history.

We're also seized with the economic opportunity. As John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, said, we will be seeing a \$6-trillion expansion of the western economy—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Glen R. Murray:—thank you very much, Mr. Speaker—and that opportunity is also unprecedented. We want Ontario to lead in this new economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Minister. I'm really pleased to see that our government is continuing to build on the progress that we've already made in reducing greenhouse gases and fighting climate change while helping our businesses to increase their productivity and competitiveness, to build on our strong economic growth.

I note that the climate change discussion sets out a bold vision which would:

- establish Ontario as a leader in climate change mitigation and science;

- redesign and build strong, carbon-neutral economies, communities, infrastructure and energy;

- protect ecosystems, including air, land and water;

- leave a legacy of a healthy world for our children—my children—and future generations.

I know my constituents in Cambridge have many great ideas for Ontario's upcoming climate change strategy and how they can reduce their carbon footprint while helping to make Ontario's economy stronger and more competitive.

Speaker, could the minister inform the House how Ontarians across the province can join the conversation on climate change?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I certainly can and am very happy to. We are going to every corner of the province: Thunder Bay, Ottawa, southwestern Ontario. We will be engaged in direct conversations with Ontarians—regular folks, municipal leaders, labour leaders, business leaders, environmentalists, families, moms, dads, grandmas. This is everybody's conversation, and it has to land well.

This is the second time we've done this. Our Climate Ready strategy started this same way five years ago. I'm very happy to report to the House that our 6% reduction below 1990 levels has been achieved for 2014, and we know that we're going to meet our 2020 cut.

All members can participate and all Ontarians can participate by going to www.ontario.ca/climatechange, where all the paper and all the data are. We're going to be reading those and really building on the knowledge,

expertise and thoughtfulness of Ontarians to get this right economically and environmentally.

ELECTORAL REFORM

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Premier. Chief Electoral Officer Greg Essensa has repeated his call for limiting advertising by special interest groups during election periods. We support his recommendation. Mr. Essensa is an officer of this Legislature, and I respectfully suggest that all members of this House should be mindful of his advice. Premier, will you accept and implement the advice of the Chief Electoral Officer?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: We are always open to conversations on ways to improve Ontario's democratic process. Ontario has rules in place to ensure that there is both transparency and free speech in our election campaigns. Third-party advertising rules were introduced in Ontario for the first time in its 2007 reforms to election legislation.

Under current rules, third parties that spend \$500 or more on election advertising are required to register with the Chief Electoral Officer. Registered third parties must also report to the Chief Electoral Officer on election advertising expenses.

Mr. Speaker, I'll say this: When they were in power, they did nothing. In 2007, Ontario, for the first time, in its reforms, put those rules in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Premier: In the last election, special interest groups spent \$9 million on political advertising. That's more than 19 registered political parties combined, and three times more than was spent in 2007. Under your watch, Premier, the deep pockets of the well-connected special interest groups win, while democracy and the citizens of Ontario lose. This is a direct violation of the principle of equality—one person, one vote—that is fundamental to democratic government. Free speech should be free.

Premier, you can't justify buying free speech or allowing it to be bought. You know it's time to bring Ontario in line with the rest of the country on electoral reform. Premier, will you cap third-party advertising spending? Yes or no?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Again, we always welcome the good recommendations of the Chief Electoral Officer. For the first time, as I said, Ontario, in its 2007 reforms to elections, introduced third-party advertising rules. This was done in 2007. We're always looking for good advice from the Chief Electoral Officer. I'll say that this party was very quick to put some rules around election advertising. We always welcome his good advice, and we will take that into consideration.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre. The Premier says that she had made

up her mind to appoint Glenn Thibeault before offers were made to Andrew Olivier. That's not what Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed are saying. They are saying that offers were on the table and no decision—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order, please.

Please continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: They said that offers were on the table and that no decisions had been made. This is what the Premier is claiming. Yesterday the Premier said, "I had, in my role as the leader of the Liberal Party of Ontario, made a decision to appoint a candidate in Sudbury" and "I had already made the decision to appoint."

My question is simple: When did you make your decision to appoint?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

1130

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When the member from Nickel Belt got up to ask a question, I was sure she was going to ask a question about health care. I was sure that there were issues in this province affecting people in her community and beyond and that she wanted to have the opportunity to put that question to the minister. I was sad to see that she is continuing the theme of negativity and personal attacks that we've seen from both parties.

I want to congratulate the member from Sudbury. I want to congratulate the people of Sudbury for choosing such a fine representative to send to Queen's Park. This is a citizen of Sudbury who has, time and time again, demonstrated his worthiness. The people of Sudbury made a thoughtful, informed and wise choice, and we look forward to working with the member from Sudbury as he works to improve the lives—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Back to the Premier: Here are some of the facts. Gerry Lougheed said to Andrew Olivier on the tape that everybody can listen to, "The Premier, up to now, has always said to me she's in favour of a nomination race. So I want to make that ... clear; she's never said to me, 'I want to appoint ...'" Glenn Thibeault.

Pat Sorbara says exactly the same thing. To Olivier she says: "You've been directly asked by the leader and the Premier to make a decision to step aside ... you recognize, then, the position that we're going to find ourselves in here, right? Where she's"—the Premier—"going to have to make a decision around the appointment, right? Versus letting this go ahead."

The question is simple: When did you make the decision to appoint?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As somebody said earlier: Pot, meet kettle. The NDP decision to install Adam Giambrone—you might remember Adam Giambrone in 2013—is well known. The Toronto Star reported that Giambrone was "parachuted into the riding"—you might remember this—"allegedly stacking the nomination

meeting." It's obvious that the third party has hired past candidates, past MPPs. That has been mentioned before.

Let's go back to the quality of the candidate who was elected by the people of Sudbury. Glenn Thibeault has fought tirelessly for supports for people with developmental disabilities, for quality services for families struggling with autism. As director of the United Way—how much more grassroots can you get than that?—he led many successful campaigns in support of community development. He's a proud volunteer with Big Brothers Big Sisters, something I share with him, and he has coached minor hockey and football, which I have not done. He's a fine new member—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, we all remember the ice storm of December 2013 so well. It caused widespread damage and blackouts across southern, western and eastern Ontario, and at its peak left over 800,000 hydro customers without power. Many of the members in this House, including yourself, Minister, know this first-hand from the storm's impact on our own communities.

In my own riding of Davenport, many residents were left without heat and power for several days. A warming centre was opened at J.J. Piccininni Community Centre on St. Clair Avenue.

In response, our government announced that it would offer a one-time ice storm assistance program. Your staff has now received all 58 applications from the municipalities and conservation authorities seeking reimbursement through the program.

Last Friday, your ministry shared an important and long-awaited update. Minister, please tell this House how our government is moving forward in support of these—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the honourable member for that question. Yes, of course I remember. I remember something else. I remember the incredible efforts of all the municipal and EMS staff who were out there building a stronger community by reaching out to their community. I want to start by complimenting them.

The province has initiated final payments to three municipalities: the townships of Mapleton, Centre Wellington and Puslinch. Here's some more good news: The other 52 municipalities and six conservation authorities that have submitted claims have been offered an interim payment, and most have availed themselves of that opportunity, which is really good, so they can get on with the task of continuing to build that strong, caring community that on a good day we all in this House want to see happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Minister, it's wonderful to hear that municipalities that have been waiting for assistance where their public costs will be able to benefit from support. I know I speak for the municipal leaders in Toronto when I say they have been eagerly awaiting these funds.

Reimbursement will go towards costs incurred to protect public health and safety, and to secure access to public roads, sidewalks and frequently travelled routes. These interim funds will also assist municipalities with their budget planning.

These interim funds will be welcome, but can the minister tell us why the ministry isn't flowing the full amounts municipalities have requested yet?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We initiated these interim payments now because we didn't want municipalities to wait any longer for at least a partial reimbursement of those expenses that they have. By the way, the interim payment has been very, very well received by municipalities.

It's important that we begin flowing these interim funds so that they can get on with the remainder of their claims, so that we can adjudicate those as quickly as we can without disadvantaging them in any real way. We're going to flow funds in a responsible way, ensuring that public dollars are spent wisely.

And as I explained earlier, the feds are involved in this, too, so we've got two sets of accountability mechanisms here. Each claim is going to be reviewed carefully, and as soon as we get that adjudicated, the full payment will be delivered to municipalities as they're hoping for.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, I'm very concerned about the state of Ontario's health care system and the availability of doctors in my riding.

Under your imposed contract with the doctors in Ontario you're prohibiting new doctors from joining family health teams in well-served areas. However, your government's model in defining well-served areas is extremely flawed.

My riding has been experiencing a shortage of doctors for a number of years. The cities of St. Thomas, Aylmer and Rodney have lost up to six doctors, and in fact the municipality of Dutton/Dunwich has only had one doctor for a number years.

Minister, too many people in my riding are without doctors. In fact, a number of the doctors in my riding will be retiring in the next three to five years, and your current model of family health teams will not allow for succession planning.

Minister, can you share with me your plans to address the doctor shortage that you have created?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you for the question opposite.

Actually, I have good news, because what we're doing with the changes that resulted from the OMA's refusal—

to walk away from the table after a year of negotiations and not accept the fair offer that was presented to them and the fair offer that was recommended by, frankly, the umpire that we brought in, retired judge Warren Winkler, who was our conciliator aiming to bring the two parties together: He said that the government's offer was a fair offer and implored the OMA to accept our offer as well, feeling that it was fair.

But what we've done with our family health teams for our important family doctors who are graduating is precisely what you're asking for: We're directing those resources to those parts of the province that need them most, to the underserved areas, the areas where there are doctor shortages, where we need to make that added effort, to make sure that our family doctors—that broad family health team, the professionals that provide that important care—go to those areas of the province that need it most.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, what's not fair about the system is the fact that your system classifies my area as well-served, which it's not. It's flawed, and under this new decision you've made with the Ontario doctors, doctors cannot come to my riding.

Minister, it's clear that you have no plan for the health care system. You're ignoring groups like the Ontario Medical Association, who want to work with you, who have plans to make the system better. Not only has your government stopped new doctors from joining family health teams, you have now threatened doctors—to penalize them—who see too many patients.

Minister, the baby boom generation is growing. It's a tremendous increase on the usage of our health care system, yet your government cut services and access to health care in order to balance the budget.

Minister, why are you cutting health care to make your government's financial budget commitment?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I don't quite know where to start. We aren't cutting health care. The health care budget continues to increase year over year, as it has for many, many years.

The physician services budget, which is currently at \$11 billion—10% of every dollar that this government spends in the province—that fund for physicians specifically is going up by 1.25% next year, 1.25% the year after that and 1.25% the year following.

We are increasing health care; we're committed to our family health teams. More than three million Ontarians currently have access to a family health team.

But quite frankly, I'm disappointed at the question, because we worked hard and diligently and with good-faith intentions with the OMA for over a year—a year and a day, to be exact. Retired Judge Warren Winkler came forward as an independent umpire. He took our side, Mr. Speaker. He asked the OMA to accept a fair offer.

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Huron—Bruce on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Speaker, I'd like to draw to the House's attention that this morning, the Minister of the Environment announced the Great Lakes Protection Act outside of the House at Ripley's Believe It or Not aquarium. Is it not the privilege of the House to hear of acts being called forward in the House before anyone else hears it? Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for her point of order. I would remind all members that I have no authority over when and where those announcements are going to be made. However, I would also say to the government and to the specific minister that the tradition of the place is always to make those announcements here in the House.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham—Kent—Essex on a point of order.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my privilege this morning to introduce to our legislators, from earlier in the public gallery, Alysson Storey, from Chatham—Kent—Essex, who is here visiting Queen's Park today.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'd actually like to correct my earlier record of introduction. I'm pleased to introduce Katherine Bowes, who I had said was the mother of former page Amber Bowes. Amber is our new page; her sister Ashley Bowes was our former page.

I'm pleased to see her back and to congratulate Amber on her first day in the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The record has been corrected.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Cambridge on a point of order.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's my privilege to welcome today, in the gallery, Christine Rier, president of ACO Cambridge, who is there with a lot of my friends from ACO.

I had seen Jean Haalboom, a former Waterloo regional councillor. She has left the gallery, but I know she was here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes.

This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon. That usually means now is the time when everybody stands still.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Arriving any minute in the House are two great people from Bruce county, from the Chepstow area—the Cargill area specifically—Rachel and Sherry Anstett. It's great to have them in Toronto today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. We welcome our guests.

Further introductions?

Seeing no further introductions, it's now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DAIRY BREEDING AWARDS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: In early January, Holstein Canada announced the equivalent to the Oscars of the dairy industry, the 2014 Master Breeder awards. The recipients across Canada are recognized for having mastered the art of breeding balanced dairy cattle, with high production and outstanding conformation with great reproduction, health and longevity.

There were 21 recipients of the Master Breeder Shield, with 12 breeders specifically from Ontario, seven from Quebec, one from Manitoba and one from British Columbia.

One recipient worth noting is from my riding, Albaddon Farms in Teeswater, Bruce county. Owned by Josh and Marjan Ireland, as well as parents Mark and Debbie, Albaddon Farms has a herd of 170 milking cows. As one of the top-producing dairy herds in Canada, they were also chosen as the best-managed herd from Ontario to British Columbia in 2012.

This is a testament to the good work being done at Albaddon Farms, and it's rare that such a large herd has accomplished this level of excellence.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that this achievement has been all homegrown by the Irelands of Albaddon Farms just south of Teeswater, Ontario.

SEX TRADE WORKERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I stand because, on December 6, the Harper government tabled Bill C-36. It was a response to a Supreme Court decision to strike down all existing prostitution laws because they put sex trade workers' lives in danger. Unfortunately for sex trade workers, the new law doesn't correct the situation but makes it worse, forcing the trade underground and putting women's and men's lives at risk.

In response, we held a media event here in December. Alice Klein, from Now magazine, and sex trade workers' organizations were here, plus they were buttressed by 190 legal and constitutional law experts, calling on the Premier and our Attorney General here to act.

Sex trade workers and their organizations have spoken to me about the dangers, the risks they face—the same dangers and risks, ironically, that the original Supreme Court decision was supposed to address.

I ask the Attorney General, on their behalf: They have tried several times for a meeting; the least you can do is meet with them.

I've asked Premier Wynne—several times she's spoken about this. The least you can do is meet with them. They would like to share their concerns, their questions and their suggestions with you. Please do it before these vulnerable people are hurt any more.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Speaker, it's Heritage Day. I rise today on Heritage Day to pay tribute to ACO Cambridge. I'm a past president of this branch of the provincial body, the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario.

ACO Cambridge, a not-for-profit organization, was founded in 1971 by citizens aghast at the demolition of the stone Central school. Founding members Pat Rosebrugh and Jean Fayle are still involved in the mission to promote the preservation of buildings, neighbourhoods and natural areas that are of architectural, historical and cultural significance.

As a result of years of advocacy work, Cambridge boasts three heritage conservation districts, many buildings designated under the Ontario Heritage Act, a heritage master plan, a fundraising annual heritage house tour, and a city that's much more inclined to preserve its built heritage and cultural landscapes that surround the Grand and Speed Rivers. Op-eds and letters to the editor increase awareness on heritage issues.

Cambridge enjoys increased tourism and economic benefits, such as the revenue from the film industry that often uses our stone streetscapes as a filming backdrop, such as for Murdoch Mysteries.

Christine Rier, the president of ACO Cambridge, is here meeting with other members today to discuss the importance of preserving our collective provincial heritage.

Speaker, I'm extremely proud to be part of the successful organization that ACO Cambridge has become. Happy Heritage Day.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Speaker, road safety is an ongoing concern for all members of this Legislature, and I just want to highlight the efforts of some of the local volunteers whose tireless efforts help make roads in my community safe every year.

Over the Christmas holiday season, Home James volunteers provided a safe ride home for those who had perhaps a little too much Christmas cheer and needed a ride. Not only do they get you home safely; they will also drive your car home, and, if needed, they will even escort

you to your door. On New Year's Eve alone, they drove 246 people home, more than doubling the total from the previous year, just on New Year's Eve. Coordinator Jodie Hogg was quoted by media about the success of the program. She said, "It's always a good time. You never get the same story from helping people out."

Recently, at an event in my riding, I learned that there were a total of 98 people who gave many hours of their evening time to Home James. To thank them for their efforts, these individuals received a special certificate from my office in recognition of the time they sacrificed, thus contributing to the huge success of this program.

Home James just completed its third year in Chatham-Kent, and on the evenings when they offered their services in the month of December, both the Chatham-Kent Police Service and the local OPP indicated that they had zero road fatalities. So you see, Speaker, as a critic for community safety, I'm so grateful that this organization helps to keep my community safe. By the way, there is always room for more communities in Ontario to take up the Home James program. This initiative will keep families intact and their communities safe, especially during the Christmas season.

So again, a shout-out to the volunteers, the organizers and the corporate sponsors who helped make this successful. Thank you.

DAUGHTERS FOR LIFE FOUNDATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: Nelson Mandela once said, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." On January 13, I attended a ceremonial signing at Wilfrid Laurier University, formalizing a partnership between the university and the Daughters for Life Foundation. This partnership will enable Laurier to sponsor two women from the Middle East as they pursue undergraduate studies.

The Daughters for Life Foundation was founded by a professor of global health at the University of Toronto, Dr. Abuelaish, in memory of his daughters Bessan, Mayar and Aya, who were killed by an Israeli tank shell during an attack on the Gaza Strip in 2009. The foundation honours the girls' love of learning and is built upon the idea that educating young women will build lasting peace in the Middle East.

Sixty-six million girls worldwide are currently deprived of basic education. Many more are removed from school before completing secondary or post-secondary studies. When women and girls are educated, it impacts not only their own lives; it impacts the lives of their family members, their children and their communities. When women have access to education, they are better able to speak out about injustice, about their rights and their visions for their communities. Education empowers women to better act as agents of peace.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Abuelaish for his incredible courage and his vision, and thank Dr. Gavin Brockett and all of the Laurier students who took this idea and turned it into a reality for their school and com-

munity. We'll be a stronger community because of it. Thank you very much.

LENT

Mr. Joe Dickson: The holy season of Lent commences today, Wednesday, February 18, which is known specifically as Ash Wednesday. You will see several foreheads similar to mine with the sign of the cross, the crucifix, made from ashes.

During these holy days, penance is to be considered an important requirement of the Christian life. Fulfillment of this duty involves prayer, works of piety and charity, and self-denial by fulfilling one's obligations more faithfully and especially by observing the prescribed fast and abstinence.

In the Roman rite, Ash Wednesday and Good Friday are days of fasting and abstinence from meat, and all Fridays during Lent should remain free from meat. The law of abstinence from meat binds those who are 14 years of age and older. The law of fasting binds those ages 18 to 59. One full meal and two smaller snacks a day are allowed during fasting.

1510

Lent ends in 40 days on Easter Sunday, and that's April 5. Three important days at that time are Good Friday, April 3, when our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified and died on the cross; Holy Saturday, April 4, when the resurrection of our Lord Jesus from the tomb was in progress; and the celebration of Easter Sunday, of course, is April 5. Forty days after the resurrection, one of the most significant days in the Christian calendar, Ascension Thursday, comes, when our Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven.

May you have a holy Easter some 40 days from now.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Last Friday I met with several community care access centre workers on the picket line in North Bay. Their message was clear, Speaker: They don't feel respected by the government; their clients aren't getting the care they need; and they want accountability in the way CCAC funds are being used. Their passion and commitment to the people they serve are heartfelt, and they deserve to be treated with dignity by this government.

My riding of Nipissing has seen a series of health care and education cuts in recent months due to this government's failed fiscal management. In total, nearly 130 full- and part-time jobs have been slashed at the North Bay Regional Health Centre, including 68 RPNs. This assault on front-line care also includes the elimination of pharmacy techs, operating room attendants and personal support workers. At Nipissing University, 22 professors are being let go, following the layoffs of 16 support staff in December, with a third stage of restructuring in the works.

This government continues to say one thing and do the other. It's cuts, not jobs. To this government, I say, after your billion-dollar gas plant scandal and billions wasted on poor infrastructure procurement, don't you dare try to balance the books on the backs of the workers of Nipissing.

EVENTS IN OTTAWA-ORLÉANS

ÉVÉNEMENTS DIVERS À OTTAWA-ORLÉANS

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: On January 27, the people of Ottawa-Orléans were able to participate in a momentous cross-partisan community event. I had the pleasure of co-hosting the first annual east-end New Year's levee along with my federal and municipal counterparts: MP Royal Galipeau; our mayor, Jim Watson; Deputy Mayor Bob Monette; and councillors Stephen Blais, Jody Mitic and Tim Tierney.

J'aimerais remercier sincèrement le nouveau membre de l'équipe d'Orléans, le conseiller Jody Mitic, pour avoir été le chef de file de cette belle aventure.

The east bloc, as we are now being called, decided some time ago to reaffirm our commitment to work in a collaborative fashion to tackle the issues that affect our community. Greater collaboration has been one of my biggest commitments since my election. It is why I moved my office close to the local councillors and the MP: in order to support one another and best serve the people of the great riding of Ottawa-Orléans.

The event was a success, and many pounds of non-perishable food items were raised for the Orléans-Cumberland Community Resource Centre.

I'm so proud to be part of this community and team as we work to make Orléans the best place to live, work and play.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Earlier this month we gathered to celebrate the beginning of Black History Month with the Kingston African and Caribbean Collective, their irrepressible president and Kingston gem Judith Brown, and guest speaker CBC News's Adrian Harewood. We remembered the past in all its pain and glory and we celebrated the achievements and contributions of black Canadians throughout history. We spoke of translator Mathieu Da Costa from the early 1600s to the lovely and inspiring multi-world-champion athlete Perdita Felicien, whom I had the good fortune to meet yesterday.

Of particular note this year was that on January 21 we celebrated Lincoln Alexander Day right across this country for the first time. Alexander was our first black member of Parliament in Canada in 1968 and he became the 24th Lieutenant Governor of Ontario in 1985.

If we celebrate the extraordinary achievements of any minority or oppressed group, we must also assume responsibility to continue their struggle. We must be

ever-vigilant to combat racism and persecution and embrace our diversity in the halls of power, in company boardrooms, in our communities and around our dining tables.

We must not stop until we have done everything in our power to fight for justice and equality for all.

Thank you. Merci beaucoup. Meegwetich.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Miller, Parry Sound–Muskoka, assumes ballot item number 29 and Ms. Elliott assumes ballot item number 30.

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES IN HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would also like to take a moment just to remind you that over the last two days we've been hearing some buzzing that's going on with people's devices. I would ask you not to lay it on your desks as, even if the mike's not on, it seems to reverberate very loudly here. I don't want the Sergeant-at-Arms to feel like he's got to get up and steal everyone's items.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

SAFE ROUNDABOUTS ACT, 2015 LOI DE 2015 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DES CARREFOURS GIRATOIRES

Mr. Harris moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to provide rules for the use of roundabouts / Projet de loi 65, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour prévoir des règles régissant l'utilisation des carrefours giratoires.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Michael Harris: Today I introduce the Safe Roundabouts Act, 2015, to enable the Minister of Transportation to make regulations establishing rules of the road that apply to roundabouts across the province.

The act further directs the minister to conduct a study about the safe use of roundabouts, and consult with members of the public before making any regulation. To that end, the minister is required to table a progress report in the Legislative Assembly every year until a regulation is made.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES GRANDS LACS

Mr. Murray moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 66, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes–St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 66, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is the third time we've introduced this bill in the House. It's strengthened; it's got more character and more mustered behind it. I look forward to working with all members of the House on our side and also with my critics, the member for Huron–Bruce and the member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

As I've said many times, I think this is a bill that's above politics. We care about the lakes passionately, and I hope that we can work together to produce a very fine piece of legislation that all of us will look back on as a gift to our grandchildren.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for affordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

1520

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Madison.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas emergency response workers (paramedics, police officers, and firefighters) confront traumatic events on a nearly daily basis to provide safety to the public; and

“Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work; and

“Whereas Bill 2 ‘An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder’ sets out that if an emergency response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder is presumed to be an occupational disease that occurred due to their employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary is shown;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 ‘An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder’.”

I couldn’t agree more with the thousands who have already signed. I’m going to give it to Riley to be delivered to the table.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers’ resources;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario’s economy and create jobs in three ways:

“—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

“—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

“—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I agree with this petition, affix my name and give it to Inaya.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We request that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario keep the obstetrics unit open at Leamington District Memorial Hospital.”

I approve of this petition. I sign it and give it to page Natalie.

HOSPITAL PARKING FEES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas accessibility to our public health care system is a foundational value of Ontario; and

“Whereas all individuals should have equal access to health care services regardless of their ability to pay; and

“Whereas patients requiring health care services often have to drive to a hospital to receive these services; and

“Whereas hospitals are increasingly using parking charges as an avenue for revenue generation thereby impacting some patients’ access based on their ability to pay; and

“Whereas the Liberal Party promised during the 2014 election campaign to cap hospital parking fees;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the government of Ontario follow through on their commitment to cap parking fees at Ontario’s hospitals at a level that ensures equitable access to health care.”

I couldn’t agree with this more. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page Vaughn to bring to the Clerk.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Scarborough–Agincourt is one of the few ridings without a ServiceOntario office in the riding;

“Whereas some residents of Scarborough–Agincourt live outside the maximum service area of the nearest ServiceOntario office;

“Whereas Scarborough–Agincourt is the home of a growing population of seniors, the oldest community in Scarborough, many of whom are mobility-impaired or have limited access to transportation;

“Whereas residents have filed numerous complaints with the constituency office about long wait times, inconvenient hours and the inaccessibility of the closest ServiceOntario office;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Legislative Assembly call upon the government of Ontario to open a ServiceOntario office in Scarborough–Agincourt to allow its residents and businesses easy and efficient access to government services.”

I fully support the petition and I give my petition to page Andrew.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current proposed OPP billing model will have a significant impact on our municipalities and the taxes paid by residents;

"Whereas the cost to households will increase by \$100 or more, which can be detrimental especially to low-income families;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: Please consider a different OPP billing model than that which is currently being proposed. If there has to be a change, it should be equitable and fair to all municipalities and any financial impact associated with it should be phased in over a longer period of time (i.e., a minimum of five years) so as to alleviate any financial burden this will cause families throughout the province."

I agree with this, sign my name and give to it page Niko.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas emergency response workers (paramedics, police officers, and firefighters) confront traumatic events on a nearly daily basis to provide safety to the public; and

"Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work; and

"Whereas Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder,' sets out that if an emergency response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder is presumed to be an occupational disease that occurred due to their employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary is shown;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 'An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder'."

It is my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page William.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is committed to ensuring the safety of drivers, passengers and pedestrians

on Ontario's roads and making the province North America's most cycling friendly jurisdiction; and

"Whereas, on average, one person is killed on Ontario's roads every 18 hours, and one person is injured every 8.1 minutes; and

"Whereas drivers who use cellphones while driving are four times more likely to be in a crash than non-distracted drivers; and

"Whereas evidence has shown that Ontario's impaired driving laws need to be strengthened to apply sanctions for driving under the influence of alcohol to those impaired by drugs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer act, 2014."

I'm going to affix my signature to this. I agree with it and will pass it on to page Julie.

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's lack of priority funding is causing the closure of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site as of May 1st, 2015; and

"Whereas in three years, the 10 beds dedicated to this program have seen over 300 patients utilize the program and at this time there is a waiting list for this successful program; and

"Whereas currently over 83% of patients are discharged from the restorative care program to home after a two- to eight-week program which has prepared them to confidently return home, recognizing this program increases their quality of life through the regaining of strength, balance and independence; and

"Whereas the closure of this program will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits that the restorative care program offers; and

"Whereas the alternative to the restorative care program will see patients staying in active medical beds longer, while they wait for long-term care; and

"Whereas the return of investment on the restorative care program far exceeds conventional approaches when considering the value of quality of life in the patients' own home as compared to a long-term-care facility; and

"Whereas it is our understanding that the CCAC has cut back its services enabling patients to remain confidently in their home;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site be recognized for its success; and for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to showcase this program as a model to be followed across the province; and

"That the closing of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site on May 1st, 2015, not proceed and the provincial government support this health care model with base funding as an investment in the health and welfare of patients so they can confidently remain in their home."

1530

I totally agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with our new page Riley.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Wow. That was a long one.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My petition is "Save Our Schools."

"Whereas the provincial government is applying enormous pressure to close and sell off schools in Toronto, while cutting provincial education funding by up to \$500 million;

"Whereas schools provide tremendous public value as community hubs, beyond the traditional use of classrooms;

"Whereas the provincial government's calculation of school usage is flawed and inaccurate because it ignores the use of schools for child care and adult education; and

"Whereas forcing school closures will make life more difficult for families in Toronto by reducing access to child care programs and eliminating public green space;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario immediately recognize that schools are important community hubs, amend the utilization formula to include the full community use of schools, and make all reasonable efforts to support and expand the use of schools as community hubs before they are closed and sold."

I'm signing this petition. I support it and I will be giving it to page Andrew.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province's social, economic and multicultural fabric;

"We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and

support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport."

I agree with this, affix my name and give it to page Eileen to bring forward.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Wynne ... act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

I agree with this and will be passing it to page Inaya.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Resolute Forest Products has closed their mill in Iroquois Falls, Ontario;

"Whereas Resolute Forest Products has indicated it's intent on demolishing the mill and restoring the site to a green space;

"Whereas residents of the town of Iroquois Falls want assurance that the Ministry of the Environment will ensure that all environmental standards met and maintained in the decommissioning of the site;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of the Environment closely monitors the decommissioning of the Resolute site in Iroquois Falls to ensure that the area is ecologically sound for future use."

I fully agree, and will sign it and send it down with page Morgan.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents of Ontario want a moratorium on all further industrial wind turbine development until a

third-party health and environmental study has been completed; and

“Whereas people in Ontario living within close proximity to industrial wind turbines have reported negative health effects; we need to study the physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

“Whereas Ontario’s largest farm organization, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed, and the Auditor General confirmed wind farms were created in haste and with no planning; and

“Whereas there have been no third-party health and environmental studies done on industrial wind turbines, and the Auditor General confirmed there was no real plan for green energy in Ontario and wind farms were constructed in haste;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows.”

And that’s the conclusion of it. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The time for petitions is over.

Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 17, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 56, Loi exigeant l'établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): When we last debated this, I believe the member from York-Simcoe had the floor. Member from York-Simcoe.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It’s a pleasure to be able to continue where I left off yesterday on Bill 56.

What we’re debating here is Bill 56, the government’s new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan scheme. I just want to quickly recap my speech from yesterday. The following outlines why this proposal should be abandoned.

First of all, the government is using the ORPP to distract from the real economic crisis in Ontario: the \$300-million provincial debt and \$12-billion deficit. Government debt is increased by \$1.4 million every hour—\$33 million every day.

The government has not provided any economic analysis of the ORPP. Does the government have any interest in how many jobs will be lost?

The government has not identified exactly who will be forced to join the ORPP; they have not defined “comparable workplace pension plan,” and this is certainly something that many people have responded to.

The government has not divulged how much the ORPP will cost to administer.

The government has not identified what will happen with self-employed Ontarians.

The government has tried to convince the public that the ORPP will operate like the Canada Pension Plan when, in fact, it will be modelled on the Québec Pension Plan.

The government has not been clear with Ontarians that their \$29-billion infrastructure plan cannot happen without the ORPP.

The government has eroded public trust so deeply by their decade of billion-dollar scandals in spending and mismanagement that people do not trust this government with another dime of their hard-earned income.

Finally, I have not received any indication from any Ontarians or Ontario businesses that they are in favour of this proposal. I have only received lengthy well-researched letters in opposition to the Ontario Registered Pension Plan.

During my time today, I will focus on three main problems with this proposal.

The government has not defined who will be forced into the ORPP by not defining what a “comparable workplace pension plan” is.

Two, the ORPP will not help the people who need it most, such as widowed seniors or those on minimum wage.

Three, the ORPP will force employers to cut employee hours and jobs in order to maintain a competitive edge in today’s highly competitive economy. The ORPP will increase our unemployment rate that has been above the national average for six years.

I referred a moment ago to the stakeholders who have contacted me. I want to take some time today to air their concerns, because these are the people who must consider the ramifications of any legislation, and they are the ones who are looking at it from the point of view: “How does this enhance our quality of life and the strength of our economy in Ontario?”

The first quote I am going to use—these come from the pre-budget hearings last month. This one comes from the president of the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association. He said the following, regarding the impact of not including defined contribution plans in the ORPP: “A balanced approach will be needed to ensure that the ORPP doesn’t undermine existing plans and disadvantage Ontario workers. The very real risk is that Ontario workers will be worse off if employers with already attractive plans find themselves unable to continue those plans if they are required to offer the ORPP.”

1540

The president of the Investment Funds Institute of Canada said, “If group RSPs are not provided a comparability exemption, we expect that the introduction of

the ORPP will cause many employers to rapidly discontinue their group RRSP programs, negatively impacting individuals savings habits.”

The senior vice-president of the Air Transport Association of Canada said, “Most flight schools are small, marginal operations which could ill afford a 4% increase in wage costs, which is usually the largest operational expense that a flight school will face.”

The vice-president of the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada said, “Is it yet another step that undermines the overall competitive position of manufacturing in the province? If manufacturing, generally, is undermined, that’s going to have significant impacts on us.”

One of the groups who had the most to say was the Ontario Chamber of Commerce: “Mainly, the chamber and our members have been worried about the potential negative impacts of the ORPP on the business climate. Chief among those concerns is the added cost of business that the ORPP presents, on top of ... other cost drivers that businesses in the province have been experiencing over the past few years, things like higher electricity prices and a higher minimum wage. All those things add to the cost of doing business and actually potentially negatively impact business competitiveness relative to other provinces and neighbouring states.

“The government, to our thinking, has yet to show any ... evidence to the contrary, and until it really does so, we’re convinced that the ORPP shouldn’t go ahead. We really want to see the government come out with an economic impact analysis of how the ORPP will impact Ontario’s economy.”

The Trillium Automobile Dealers Association said that the government’s “payroll tax, as we call it, will make it more expensive to hire people, and that’s not a good thing. So we’re very concerned.

“Again, it takes money out of the auto sector.”

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters said that “it’s another burden and it’s another cost that employers and employees, those who can least afford to pay it, will now have to incur....

“We’re concerned that things like high electricity rates and the new costs associated with the new pension will take us further away from being able to leverage full opportunity and advantage for the province.”

Ontario’s Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association said, “A disaster—it will be a disaster. The industry is struggling right now....

“It will set back Ontario, going backwards, and at the end of the day, will contribute to the deficit. At the end of the day, instead of improving the deficit, it’s going to escalate it.”

The Retail Council of Canada said, “When I talk to small business, they say, ... ‘this is going to cost me \$20,000 to \$30,000 a year. How are you going to get that back for me?’ Because businesses are struggling today to survive, and so they’re looking for offsets.... They’re looking to minimize the hit because the alternative is that they have to reduce staffing costs, labour costs or a percentage of sales, and if the sales aren’t there to support,

they’re going to reduce the number of people who are working in the retail environment.”

The CFIB also had considerable ideas to suggest. I’d like to highlight the voice of Canada’s small and medium-sized business community, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The CFIB presented its sound analysis of the ORPP at pre-budget hearings held by the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs less than a month ago. At the hearings, the CFIB vice-president, Mr. Plamen Petkov, commented on the lack of public understanding of the ORPP proposal: “I’m not quite sure, though, that the average Ontarian actually understands that this is going to be money coming from their paycheck. I think they are going to realize that after they see that deduction in 2017 onwards.

“I think there is a big education component here that is missing from the whole debate on things such as, it is not a free plan; it is not something that the government is giving to the people; and there’s also the fact that it’s going to take 40 years of contributions to actually get the benefit....

“So it is really a combination of different charges that, as a small business owner, you either have to take from your payroll, meaning reducing your labour force, or you have to pass it on to your consumer, meaning raising prices. If you keep raising prices you’re not going to be competitive and you’ll be out of business pretty soon.

“Over the last week or so, we saw reports of big companies, multinational chains, exiting Canada and Ontario because they are not competitive. They cannot stay competitive. The same is valid for a small business. If you start raising your prices to absorb some of these costs, you’re not going to make it too far.”

I admire the credibility of the CFIB as well as the frankness of its vice-president. In order to give more strength to the CFIB, they sent a letter to Ontario’s Associate Minister of Finance conveying a number of grave concerns with this proposal. This is the most important section for the record: The ORPP “represents a 40% increase in the pension premiums they”—Ontario’s businesses—“currently pay to the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). Regardless of whether you call these contributions a premium, a tax, savings, or an investment, one thing is clear—these will be a mandatory charge on employers’ payrolls and on their employees’ paycheques....

“The vast majority (86%)” of respondents—Ontario’s business owners—“oppose the implementation of the ORPP.”

The CFIB did a poll to see what employers would do if the plan was forced on them. “The respondents indicated that in order to cope with the added cost of ORPP contributions, 69% would be forced to freeze or cut salaries and 53% would have to eliminate jobs. At a time when the provincial economy continues to stagnate, this type of plan would certainly create significant financial hardship for small businesses and the people that they employ, especially for those who are already finding it tough to operate day to day....

"The analysis shows that this mandatory pension plan would cost Ontario 160,000 person-years of employment. As well, it would increase the province's unemployment rate by 0.5% by 2020 and would permanently reduce wages in the longer-term."

The peak annual employment loss amounts to 42,000 jobs lost in the year 2020.

CFIB continues:

"(1) If implemented, the ORPP will severely undermine the ability of Ontario's job creators to grow their businesses and continue offering new jobs to Ontarians....

"(2) The ORPP targets mostly small business owners and their employees.

"The current proposal exempts those with defined-benefit (DB) plans from contributing into the ORPP. This means federally regulated industries, big businesses and most public sector workers will not be impacted by this new mandatory premium. It is unfair and rather cynical that those that will be exempt from the plan are its loudest cheerleaders....

"(3) Forcing additional pension contributions reduces income available to cover essential goods and services for Ontario families.

1550

"As we have discussed previously, the issue of insufficient retirement savings for segments of the Canadian society has resulted not from a lack of savings options or motivation to set more money aside for retirement, but from a lack of disposable income.... Ultimately, any new or additional taxes or fees would reduce Ontarians' ability to pay for essential goods and services such as food, rent or mortgage payments."

The ministry has a chart which shows how the payments would come for people. They're based on a 40-year time.

Number (4) says, "This is a point which has not been broadly communicated by the government. Any increase in the future disposable income of the retired is offset by the decline in the disposable incomes of those contributing today. This is only made worse by the fact that the working poor would be asked to contribute even though this would lower their entitlements to existing social security supplements (i.e. clawing back OAS and GIS), which replace close to 100% of the income for that segment of society.

"(5) Ontarians don't trust an entity at arm's-length from government to manage their retirement savings. Opposition for the ORPP can be further explained by the questionable past performance of existing public pension funds, many of which already carry ... unfunded liabilities to the tune of billions, and have required the injection of public dollars in order to meet pension obligations.... The structure of the current proposal begs the following questions: What would happen to an underfunded ORPP? Who would be responsible for any shortfalls? Ultimately, taxpayers would be on the hook for shortfalls and would bear a significant portion of the risk, as has been demonstrated time and again."

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business's opposition is strongly echoed by the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, including 50 municipal chambers of commerce—the Fraser Institute and C.D. Howe have warned against the ORPP—the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, the certified professional accountants, Primerica financial, the Progressive Contractors Association, the Investment Funds Institute of Canada, the Air Transport Association of Canada, the Chemistry Industry Association of Canada, Trillium auto dealers, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the Retail Council of Canada, the Ontario Home Builders' Association, small and medium-sized businesses, citizen groups, municipalities, statisticians, and public policy and business academics.

One such public policy academic who has been sounding the alarm over the proposal is Jack Mintz, the University of Calgary director and Palmer Chair in Public Policy. Here is a quote from his article from last Friday:

"It is far from clear an expansion of CPP, QPP or the ORPP is at all needed for the broad population.

"In fact, a mandatory Ontario pension plan could do more harm than good.

"First, once taking into account personal taxation and income-tested programs, the Ontario plan will discriminate against low-income seniors and some others in middle-class ranges.

"Low-income seniors will be taxed on Ontario pension income as well as lose GIS payments, 50 cents on each dollar. For a senior with \$20,000 in income, barely above the measured poverty line, the Ontario pension plan will be reduced from \$2,848 to \$1,424 with the loss in GIS and a further \$584 by federal and provincial tax payments, leaving only \$740 to cover rent and food. While working, the person would pay the same payroll tax rate as others but would end up with a pretty [bad] after-tax return on the asset"—the ORPP.

"Second, any mandatory scheme has bad consequences for those who do not need it. Young families trying to save for home equity will need to pay into a plan that is a less important retirement asset at their stage of life. Others who invest in businesses and other financial opportunities will have to face new taxes."

The third issue: The ORPP "will be expensive to operate.... Ontario will need to track migrants in and out of the province. It will also need to administer the plan on its own. It will also lead to large unfunded liabilities, adding to provincial debt, if payroll taxes do not cover benefits."

These stakeholder voices of reason need to be listened to by the government.

One of the issues that has been suggested is that the ORPP is modelled after the Quebec pension, not the CPP. To expose the problem with collecting pension funds with the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Julia.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Oh, sorry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): There seem to be some lovely conversations going on, and one that's really remarkable is someone from the other side holding court over there—really amazing. If you want to hold court, at least do it on your side.

I would appreciate a little quiet. I can't even hear the poor member from York-Simcoe, because there are nine sidebars going on.

So keep it down, and if you want to talk, go outside. After all, it is your member who's speaking. Thanks.

Go ahead.

Mrs. Julia Munro: In comparing the CPP and the Quebec pension—it's found in their legislative mandates—their investment strategies flow from very different places, with very different exposure to risk and very different priorities.

The objectives of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board are given in section 3 of the act. It says:

"(a) to assist the Canada Pension Plan in meeting its obligations to contributors and beneficiaries...;

"(b) to manage any amounts transferred to it ... in the best interests of the contributors and beneficiaries" of the plan; and

"(c) to invest its assets with a view to achieving a maximum rate of return, without undue risk of loss, having regard to the factors that may affect the funding of the Canada Pension Plan and the ability of the Canada Pension Plan to meet its financial obligations on any given business day."

To carry out its objectives, it operates at arm's length from the government and is armed with a strong set of governance safeguards against any real or perceived political interference in its operation.

On the other hand, the Quebec caisse is "to receive moneys on deposit as provided by law and manage them with a view to achieving optimal return on capital within the framework of depositors' investment policies while at the same time contributing to Quebec's economic development."

As the National Post editorial board put it last month, pension plans are meant to benefit those who contributed to the plans, not the governments that created them.

It is clear the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is the wrong idea at the wrong time. Many organizations and individuals have put forward thoughtful suggestions to help Ontarians retire with dignity, which the government refuses to embrace. Such ideas are to:

- control government spending and reduce taxes to allow Canadians to contribute more towards retirement savings;

- create new incentives for people to save, like a one-time match for RRSPs or TFSA's;

- allow individuals to voluntarily contribute more towards their retirement;

- increase RRSP and TFSA contribution limits.

Those are just a few of the things that could be done.

While a new mandatory pension plan is seen as extremely burdensome and unaffordable, there is clearly some support for voluntary options, such as the PRPP.

As the collected voices of people who have deep concerns, we strongly urge the government to carefully examine the impact that this proposal would have on Ontario's job creators. If the government is determined to move forward with this ill-advised plan, despite the evidence that small business owners, their employees and other Ontarians alike cannot afford it, then the following amendments are suggested:

- exempt employers with defined contribution plans, RRSPs, group RRSPs, PRPPs;

- increase the minimum earnings threshold to \$30,000; and

- exempt smaller firms with fewer than 20 employees from contributing.

1600

As I complete my response to the second reading of Bill 56, I want to leave you with some final thoughts and concerns I have identified throughout the remarks. The data exists which challenges even the need for an ORPP. The threat of a 1.9% paycheque deduction and a matching employer payroll tax is a dangerous threat to jobs and a healthy economy, as is the absence of clarity regarding comparability of existing pensions and no answers to questions about timing, eligibility and financing.

Finally, as revealed in the 2014 budget, the real objective of Bill 56 is contained in the following quote: "... Ontarians to save through a proposed new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, new pools of capital would be available for Ontario-based projects such as building roads, bridges...."

The government needs to re-examine Bill 56. People from all walks of life, from a wide background, have all joined in unison to demonstrate the unintended consequences for the province and its citizens. Premier, people see this scheme as a dire threat to the fragile stability of this province's economy. The public needs more financial analysis and less conjecture. The public also needs to know the truth: that your \$29-billion infrastructure spending plan cannot go ahead without the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from York-Simcoe. I think when we have debates like this, you actually see how fundamentally differently we do see the world, ultimately.

I think there are a few things that we need to remember. One is that this is the first stage of this legislation. In many respects, there has been a lot of discussion about why this part is actually coming right now, and it's permissive in nature—it sort of gives us permission to talk about pensions, when we actually always had the ability to talk about pensions. Clearly, we do not see them as the dangerous, evil force of nature which is going to fall upon the province of Ontario, because we recognize as a party, as do many economists, that income security and savings in this province is not just an emerging issue, it is upon us right now, and that it is

incumbent upon governments to be progressive in the way that they plan for the future, for all people in the province.

I think when we quote people, as well—I mean, we will quote people like the Centre for Policy Alternatives, who recognize that women are inordinately affected by a lack of savings because they actually fall victim to more precarious, part-time, contract work. They don't have the savings that the member from York-Simcoe mentioned. Their ideas around retiring with dignity will not happen—for people to more voluntarily donate money to their retirement plans—if they don't have jobs, if they are living in that low-income, precarious place in the province of Ontario.

I wouldn't hold out hope that this government is going to save more money and pass it along the line, because there has never been a government which has wasted as much money as the Liberal government of Ontario in this past Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member from York-Simcoe for her remarks. Also, I know that, as my critic for this file, she's very passionate and concerned about the issue of retirement security. I've bumped into you at a number of events when we're both really listening to the best that's out there.

We know that Ontario's pension system is strong. What we want to ensure is that we prepare for the future. I believe that there are many things that you've said in your remarks that we can agree on, and that's that after a lifetime of working, people deserve to retire with comfort and with dignity. It's important that we take the steps necessary to ensure that that actually occurs.

I do want to just remind the House that we have taken a look at the economic impact of the ORPP or a supplemental plan. David Dodge, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, has done an analysis. When we look at the long-term implications, having consumption in retirement is very important to Ontario's economy. It ensures that people will continue to spend into retirement on those very same everyday needs that they have. It's important that they have that continuous stream of income coming in, and that is what a pension offers.

We are absolutely modelling this on the CPP. We're mirroring the key features of that plan as closely as possible. I've been out consulting right across this province, getting the best information that we can to ensure that we build and design the best plan possible for the people of Ontario. I want to thank you for the work that you're doing on this file and helping us to strengthen Bill 56. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's an honour to again rise in this House and to address the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act. In listening to debate from all parties, I have some very serious concerns about this particular plan, and I'll tell you why. I've been privileged to have spoken

with a number of businesses from the Chatham-Kent riding, and these businesses are very concerned by what it's going to cost them above and beyond. Where does that money come from? The money obviously comes from their bottom line. In addition, a lot of the individuals themselves will end up with less take-home pay, because they will be taxed at 1.9% of their earnings, provided they're earning over \$35,000 a year.

But, you know, there are a few other things as well. I think that perhaps this government, if they spent more time concerning themselves with the number of unemployed people, which is 600,000 people in the province of Ontario, the high unemployment, the debt and deficit, and getting that in order, as opposed to this particular pension plan—with all due respect to the Associate Minister of Finance, sometimes I think we're told what we're supposed to say and do.

But you know what? Years ago, before I got involved in politics, I was self-employed. Does that mean, then, that because I was self-employed, as an employee of my company I would have to pay 1.9% and then, because I am now the employer of my company, an additional 1.9% on top of that as well? That hasn't been fully brought out yet.

The last thing is—and this question hasn't been asked yet—what about MPPs in this Ontario Legislature? We have self-directed pension plans. We don't have a pension plan per se, so that then means that the Ontario Legislature will have to pay 1.9% of total earnings? That's 1.9% times our salaries times 107—questions that need to be answered.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm happy to have the opportunity to comment on the remarks made by the PC Party critic, the member from York-Simcoe. Our critic, Jennifer French, will be up shortly. She will be delivering a leadoff speech of one hour, doing a critique of the bill, noting what's useful and what's weak. I'll leave that to our critic.

But I want to speak to some of the key arguments made by the PC critic. This is one of the richest societies in the world; it is. It's extraordinary. Go to any other part of this globe and you will see that Ontario is extraordinarily rich. But on a regular basis I go and talk to seniors in my riding. You talk to seniors in your ridings. The last year is the first time I've ever had people come up to me and say, "We need price controls on food." That's a shocker. Price controls on rent? I understand that. Price controls on energy? I understand where people are coming from. But when people are feeling squeezed to the point where they're calling for price controls on food, you're talking about a pension system that's not working.

I'm not saying that what the Liberals have put forward is the solution—again, I leave it to our critic to go into those details—but if I followed the PC analysis on this, we never would have established medicare. If it wasn't existing today, what arguments would be made against

it? I think that they very much would be the arguments that have been set out by the PC critic on this: that if we had medicare, people would be unemployed; if we had medicare, Ontario's firms wouldn't be able to compete. That does not make sense in terms of delivering a society that we all want to live in with dignity and some security. **1610**

So I think we're going to debate this bill; I hope we can improve it. But the approach that we shouldn't have publicly funded pensions is wrong.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from York-Simcoe has two minutes.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I thank the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, the associate minister, and the members from Chatham-Kent-Essex and Toronto-Danforth for their comments.

I don't think I said that I was as opposed to a public pension. What I did say was that with this one, the mechanics, as we know, have some serious, serious problems that people have identified.

The member for Kitchener-Waterloo and I would agree on the importance of jobs. The concern that has been raised by so many in looking at the way that this bill is structured means that it would cost jobs. In small business, people are looking at essentially 4%—3.8%—and they don't have anywhere for that to come from, unless they are going to be able to cut their costs, which may then translate to jobs or raised prices, in which case they run the risk of pricing themselves out of the business.

As far as the member for Toronto-Danforth talking about the rich society, it's very clear in remarks that I gave that there are people, who I quoted, who are concerned about seniors and people like that who do not see this as the right tool. That's the thing that I think is important to understanding what is the basis of my concern: that it may, in fact, harm the very people that it purports to help.

So I'm pleased that I have been given the opportunity to take part in this debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is always my distinct privilege to stand in this Legislature and bring the voices of Oshawa with me, but on this occasion it is my privilege and my responsibility to speak as the NDP critic for pensions on behalf of the two thirds of Ontarians who do not have a workplace pension, and to speak for those who deserve to feel secure in their retirement.

Pensions have always been a vital piece of our economic stability and the cornerstone of financial security in retirement. Today, I will be speaking on Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

Ontarians deserve the right to retire with dignity, and the next generation is not going to be taken care of. Two thirds of Ontarians do not currently have a workplace pension. Some Ontarians with insufficient workplace pensions still will struggle into retirement. It is difficult

to imagine that the majority of our aging population will not have the resources to pay their own way, to afford housing, to buy necessities, to contribute to the economy or to live with dignity. It is a pretty grim reality that we are facing collectively.

We have a retirement savings crisis in Ontario. Whether we are talking about retiring seniors, those in the prime of their working lives or the next crop of workers to come, we need to be doing more.

In 2012, the median income for Ontarians over the age of 65 was \$26,720, or \$2,227 per month. To put that in perspective, the average monthly cost for seniors' housing in Ontario last year was over \$2,750. That's more than \$500 short every month only taking housing into account. We cannot allow this to be the future for our seniors.

And what about our youth? The government simply isn't doing enough to address youth unemployment in this province, and it is worrying. Talk is cheap. Not only do we need to take action now, but we need to start planning for the future. How on earth can our youth, without employment, start to save for retirement when they can't even pay their tuition bills today?

Debt continues to balloon, jobs don't just appear, and future stability is not on the horizon. If their own government doesn't have a strong plan for the future, how can the youth of today be expected to plan for themselves?

I am pleased to serve Ontario as the NDP pension critic. I look forward to working to hold this Liberal government to account when it comes to the future financial stability of workers, whether they are General Motors pensioners in my riding of Oshawa or Ontarians across all of our constituencies.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Eglinton-Lawrence is a little loud.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I hope we will see this government re-evaluate and reprioritize its retirement savings initiatives and prioritize Ontarians over financial institutions. I honestly hope we will actually see this Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and not just hear about it. We implore this government to design and implement a progressive public pension plan for hard-working people across Ontario who deserve one, and stop focusing on exceptions and exemptions and start focusing on helping more Ontarians. All Ontarians deserve the right to retire with dignity, and I am here today to remind the government to keep this principle at the forefront as we continue to debate the details of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my remarks, I am truly humbled by the opportunity to stand in this chamber and speak at length about an issue that is so significant to all Ontarians and to our province as a whole, and I am honoured to speak on behalf of the NDP and the rich history of support our party has shown to the pension movement in Ontario and across Canada.

In 2009, New Democrats reached out to constituents all over the province to learn directly from Ontarians

about what changes were needed in Ontario's retirement system. While those consultations were more than just window dressing, arguably unlike the government's recent round of consultations, we ultimately came to the same conclusion. Despite the fact that the government opted not to support the Ontario retirement plan as proposed by the NDP in early 2010, we are pleased to see that they've come around and found the value in this concept and the need for proactive action.

Our work on fairness issues, such as retirement security, is what first attracted me to this party, and it's because of the core principles of collective good that I am standing here as a New Democrat. As a teacher, I was fortunate enough to find myself in an occupation that provided a good and reliable pension, and as a New Democrat, I believe that opportunity should be extended to all people. As New Democrats, we have always believed and will always believe that all Ontarians should have access to a strong defined benefit pension plan. For those who don't have one, it is our duty as representatives of this province to provide it.

It's important to note that the ORPP will not solve all the problems that ail the pension system in Ontario. As we work to address the retirement security crisis in this province and acknowledge the need for proactive solutions, we must also address the existing gaps in our system if we want to make the most significant possible change. It's important to add new tools for delivering security in retirement, but that doesn't mean we can ignore the problems that are right in front of us today. We need to work within the existing system, as well, to ensure it is operating effectively and reliably.

The Canadian pension system is based on three pillars that are intended to provide reliable retirement security across the country. Pillar 1 is universal government benefits for seniors, also known as old age security, or OAS, the guaranteed income supplement, or GIS, and the Ontario Guaranteed Annual Income System, or GAINS. Together, these three programs provide guaranteed income to all seniors to ensure at least a minimum standard of living. Pillar 2 is the Canada Pension Plan, or CPP, which provides a reliable benefit to all Canadian workers. Pillar 3 is employment pension plans and individual retirement savings.

Together, these three pillars comprise the backbone of a strong retirement income system in Canada. But the third pillar is failing us. Today, two thirds of workers in Ontario do not have a workplace pension plan, and those who do cannot always rely that their pension will be there when they retire.

This government has spoken at length about its enthusiasm for voluntary savings options such as PRPPs, but Ontarians are leaving millions of dollars of RRSP room on the table every year. In 2012 in my riding of Oshawa, 95% of those aged 65 or older received income from CPP, but only 9.4% received income from an RRSP. In terms of workplace plans and in terms of personal savings, the third pillar is failing. According to December's Auditor General's report, 92% of all defined

benefit pension plans in Ontario were underfunded at the start of this year, and over the past eight years, the total amount of underfunding of these plans has grown from \$22 billion to \$75 billion. This is not an insignificant problem. The fact is, we have a retirement security crisis in Ontario, and part of the reason for that crisis is that Ontarians don't feel secure that their pension will be there when they retire.

1620

Every day my office hears from constituents who are concerned about the security of their pensions. Their retirement plan is based on the belief that their pension—something they've contributed to their entire working lives—will be there when they retire. But as that date approaches, that assumption appears less and less certain. This is a sentiment I am sure that all of us have heard in our constituencies across the province.

Stories from the not-too-distant past, such as Nortel or Algoma Steel, and stories that are still playing out in front of us, such as US Steel in Hamilton, continue to remind us of the need for reform.

I would like to read part of an email I received from two former US Steel employees, and how the instability of their pension has affected their ability to plan for retirement:

"My wife and I are both retired from US Steel, but formerly Stelco employees. Conditions of our employment included a defined pension plan with benefits.

"I fully realize that things can change and steps may have to be taken to reduce financial losses by a company, but to do that on the backs of employees who have already given the better portion of their lives to help achieve the company's goals is not only unfair, but a broken promise of what was expected in retirement. Some retired earlier based on circumstances and calculations made by then Stelco. My wife was one of those. Now a shift in time later we are faced with a dilemma of a possible reduction in pension and benefits for both of us!

"If this happens, we will undoubtedly be in a dire situation faced with having to make many changes to get by. It definitely won't be the same lifestyle we planned on based on our pensions and benefits to date. This at a time in our lives when we shouldn't have to worry about whether we may have to go back to work at 65 or in my case 70 years old. And that's only if we can find work. This letter to you is intended to express our concerns about our future and what is being done by government officials to stop this injustice by US Steel.

"It seems US Steel has broken a few promises they made to the employees and the province when taking over Stelco.

"Let them find other ways to achieve their goals without putting their burden on the backs of pensioners....

"By the way it isn't the pensioners' fault the pension plan is underfunded."

I would also like to read a local comment that was sent to me through my website from a Sears retiree:

"I cannot understand why a government that is trying to create a pension plan for seniors in low-income situations cannot see the damage and future costs to its own budget related to even one large defined pension plan failure.

"The Sears situation is one example where I, myself, a 38-year retired employee, will be affected because of the lack of concern and action of the government. The government continues to allow large companies to defer the payments—top ups—into pension plans while all along allowing massive dividends to shareholders and fund managers."

The third pillar is only as strong as the regulations that support it. On that front, this government is failing. Retirement security isn't just about promising a benefit, it is also about ensuring that benefit is delivered. Though the ORPP will provide a necessary supplement to the existing pension system, that does not excuse the government from its obligations to effectively regulate workplace pensions.

The Auditor General made five recommendations for improving the state of Ontario pension plans during her December report, and we are still waiting to see the government act on any of them. In fact, I wrote a letter to the Minister of Finance on December 17, which I have here, calling on the government to adopt the AG's recommendations. Here is a piece from that letter:

"In her report, the Auditor General made five recommendations for improving the state of defined benefit pension plans in Ontario, such as providing the superintendent of FSCO the same powers as his federal counterpart. This is a matter of grave concern across the province and specifically for General Motors employees of my riding of Oshawa. I ask that you take the necessary steps to protect pensioners across the province and adopt the Auditor General's recommendations."

Though it's not the feel-good, headline-grabbing story that the government is looking for on the pension file, it's an important part of the puzzle for strengthening our retirement system.

But no plan is foolproof, and there are always unforeseen bumps in the road. There need to be fail-safes built into the system to ensure that if the parachute doesn't open, there's still something in place to cushion the fall. In the Ontario pension system, this comes in the form of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, or PBGF.

The PBGF was established in 1980 to ensure that when a company goes under and a pension plan is wound up, pensioners are not left bearing the full brunt of the impact. Under the current system, the PBGF will cover up to \$1,000 per month in lost benefits for a worker. Unfortunately, as we've seen in the Nortel and Algoma Steel examples, sometimes \$1,000 per month is not a sufficient safety net.

For workers, this means instability, it means insecurity, and it just doesn't cut it. Often the \$1,000 benefit guarantee is enough, but for a worker whose monthly benefit has been reduced by, for example, \$2,000, the inadequacy of the guarantee can mean the difference

between security and having to choose between paying their mortgage or their child's tuition.

Twice, my colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek has put forward a private member's bill calling on the government to increase the benefit under the PBGF to \$2,500 per month, and twice his bill has stalled. For a government that is trying to show support for retirement security, this seems like a pretty simple way to show it. As I stated earlier, retirement security isn't just about promising a benefit, it is also about ensuring that that benefit is delivered.

I should note that my colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and I aren't the only ones calling for this change. Harry Arthurs, the expert whom your government enlisted to review the state of the pension system in Ontario, first called for an enhancement of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund in his 2008 report. As Mr. Arthurs noted in 2008, increasing the protected benefit to \$2,500 per month would simply reflect the effect of inflation on the original \$1,000 benefit. Seven years later and that number needs to be reviewed again.

So while the government continues to develop the new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, I ask that it also review the recommendations made by the Auditor General in her December report and the recommendations made by Harry Arthurs in his report in 2008. It might not be the exciting story that you're looking for, but it's an important part of the bigger picture that you can't continue to ignore.

The members on the government side sometimes groan and heckle when we talk about broken Liberal promises, but the question must be asked for the sake of two thirds of Ontarians without a workplace pension, for people living in a never-ending cycle of financial struggle and for people who deserve and want stability in their retirement—it must be asked for people who want to one day be able to retire. The question is this: Assuming we see this pension plan take shape and come to life, will it be the most progressive plan for the most people possible? Interestingly, we don't yet know.

Bill 56 appears to be a token bill that establishes a rudimentary framework and little else. Anything we think we know about this pension plan we have read in the budget or the Liberal discussion paper.

Bill 56 provides the following priorities: "The government of Ontario shall, no later than January 1, 2017 and in accordance with the parameters set out in this act, establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan." It also lays out that, at a later date, "The Minister of Finance or another member of the executive council shall introduce legislation that ... provides for the administration and investment management of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan through the administrative entity described in section 2;" and "provides for the requirements of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, including the basic requirements."

So, essentially, this bill says that another bill is coming that will outline who will administer and manage the plan. We have been reassured by the government that

it will be an arm's-length entity. Let's make sure that it is.

Also in this bill is the schedule of basic requirements of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Here is what we know: "Eligible employers and eligible employees shall contribute to the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan."

1630

We also find out a bit more about the obligation of eligible employers to deduct contributions. We find out about remittance to a yet-to-be-established administrative entity. We find out that the maximum threshold for 2017 will be \$90,000, and that the combined employer-employee contribution rate shall not exceed 3.8%. And we find out that some employees will be eligible and others will be exempt. Those with a comparable plan will be exempt. Retirement benefits shall be paid for the life of the plan member beginning at 65. There are a few more details, but certainly we are left with more questions—far more questions—than we have answers for.

So let's start with this question: Why the rush to table this flimsy, token piece of legislation when it accomplishes almost nothing concrete? Was it because it was tabled the same day as the insurance company- and bank-appealing PRPP legislation? Was it so that the government could appear to be offering a progressive option alongside a private financial product?

Regardless of the reason for the rush, here we are. We know that to develop the strongest and most comprehensive, progressive and inclusive pension plan for the most working Ontarians, there needs to be time and attention paid to working out the details, both broad and specific, which brings me to the government's publicized priority of public engagement.

The government spent time recently conducting round table public consultations around the province. I had hoped to have one in the Durham and Oshawa area, but, alas, there were only about a dozen consultations and we were not lucky enough to host one. However, it was my distinct pleasure to invite myself to the kickoff consultation in Kingston, Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, I hope you will allow me a little walk down memory lane, if I may. I love Kingston. Kingston is one of my favourite communities. It was a dynamic city that I learned inside and out as a student living and studying there. I did my undergraduate degree there, and I have nothing but fond memories of the city and the beautiful landscape and the vibrant downtown. It's hard to believe that I graduated 15 years ago. I was a member of the graduating class of 2000. Fortunately, I was able to graduate with minimal and not insurmountable student debt. Tuition and living expenses were so much more affordable, and my parents were in a position to lessen my personal burden. I was very fortunate.

I cannot imagine the reality of students who are graduating now with a debt burden likely equal to the first mortgages of some of the MPPs in this Legislature. I can't imagine graduating with that debt burden into a climate of staggering youth unemployment and underemployment. I can't imagine graduating with that debt

burden and facing debt repayments, housing costs, transit costs, possibly dental costs, possibly child care costs and even consider saving for a wedding or a trip or for an eventual down payment to start building home equity, as we heard yesterday from a Conservative member was the solution, or to consider saving for retirement. How is someone facing that economic reality able to save for the future when the present is robbing them of a secure future? But I digress.

Back to the government consultation in Kingston, I think, to be fair, the government clearly outlined in their discussion paper what it was they were wanting to hear from Ontarians. The problem was Ontarians wanted to share more than was invited.

I'd like to read an email I received from a constituent on this very topic:

"Being 30, retirement seems like something very far away for myself and my soon-to-be wife. In fact, our retirement fund keeps getting dipped into with unexpected costs, like fixing my car or putting down a dear pet....

"I heard of the difficulty people are having in trying to track down these public consultations about the Ontario pension plan the government looks to introduce.

"In fact, it seems really strange that the government would be introducing one of the biggest social programs our province has seen in a while and yet the general public barely gets a voice or a choice in how this program will work....

"If the ORPP is to become a reality, it must be a plan in which all Ontarians benefit from!"

Hopefully the government will carefully consider and learn from the shared submissions and stories from across the province.

Some of the voices in that room in Kingston were likely sharing similar messages across the province. The business community was well represented and shared their perspectives, as did community members from local unions and neighbours with no affiliation but a vested interest in our shared future. People across the province have a lot at stake. There will be an impact on businesses, no doubt. But imagine the impact on those same businesses and community members when people are retiring in droves with no predictable income to spend in their communities. Imagine the downtown of any city, already challenged to do business in some cases. Imagine the downtown when no one feels free enough to spend, to shop, to meet a friend for lunch. What will that impact look like?

We don't want our communities to suffer. As Ontarians, I don't believe we want our neighbours to struggle. We don't want our businesses to go under. We don't want our young people to feel hopeless. We don't want our seniors hungry and destitute. We want people employed. We want people to be secure and comfortable in their golden years.

In 1965, the Canada Pension Plan was first established on a simple principle: that being a senior should not be the greatest indicator that an individual will live in

poverty. It is from that initial belief that one of our country's largest, most inclusive social programs was born, and it is because of that same principle that we are all here today discussing pensions. At the end of the day, all Ontarians, all Canadians and all people deserve the right to retire with dignity.

An hour really adds up. Okay.

Too often we are told that pension plans are a luxury or they are a thing of the past. But retirement security is not a luxury; it is a necessity. The Canada Pension Plan continues to prove that collective retirement security can be delivered in an efficient, effective and reliable manner. To this end, I would like to share a comment that was shared with me on Facebook: "I am disabled, on a disability pension from a local employer who paid me very little money and who nickels and dimes me for every bit of disability pension I receive. Retire? I want to survive. Retirement and any kind of comfort with basic needs is a dream I can't afford."

Speaker, life doesn't stop at retirement. The CPP was created on the principle that it is beneficial to all of us when our friends and our neighbours aren't struggling and can continue to contribute to the economy after they retire. Unfortunately, though, as the world has changed around us, the benefit provided by the CPP has become insufficient. The maximum yearly benefit is \$12,500, and the average senior ends up receiving less than \$7,000 a year from the Canada Pension Plan. It remains our steadfast belief, as the government maintains as well, that the ideal way to solve the retirement security crisis is through an enhancement of the CPP. It is the simplest solution for the greatest number of people, and it would permit a number of efficiencies and securities that can only be provided on a national scale.

It is too bad that our Prime Minister does not see it the same way. Like our Conservative colleagues to my right, Prime Minister Harper also believes that our retirement security crisis can be solved with voluntary savings options that fill the pockets of bankers and insurance brokers collecting hefty fees at every turn.

With CPP expansion currently off the federal table, we are left to explore other options. But I remind the government not to forget our shared belief that increasing the CPP is the ideal option. As they continue to roll out the design of the ORPP, I hope they will ensure that the plan can be easily integrated in the event of future CPP expansion, after Prime Minister Mulcair is sworn in.

The NDP supports the idea of public pensions. That's why we proposed one for Ontario in 2010. The NDP supports progressive public programs. We don't, however, and never will support Harper-style pooled retirement pension plans, or PRPPs, that put banks ahead of people. It is concerning that the government so clearly prioritized bank products and Bay Street over pensions and the financial security of workers in this province. I was under the impression that, as members of provincial Parliament, we work for the people of Ontario and not for private financial institutions. PRPPs are not part of an

Ontario retirement pension plan; they are financial products.

The government is selling the idea of an Ontario retirement pension plan to Ontarians. The comforting and progressive language we are all hearing from the government speaks to the need for stability and the ability to live with dignity into retirement.

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However, the marketing of the PRPP legislation is that the government is giving Ontarians voluntary options. These voluntary bank products are not part of an Ontario retirement pension plan. They are favours for banks and investment companies that, incidentally, are going to be thrilled when Ontarians start putting their money into bank coffers. I'm not saying these aren't investments, but losing an average of 20% to 30% over the life of the investment, due to fees, is not the kind of retirement security that Ontarians should be banking on.

If this government is truly committed to the idea of helping Ontarians plan for and afford their futures, if they truly believe in retirement security and stability, then they should have led with public pensions and not with their Harper-style pooled retirement pension plans that commit money and benefit to corporations and banks. As I said before, banks and big business are doing just fine and they're not planning to retire anytime soon.

There are many ways to invest money in this province. If you have money to invest, you have options—more soon with the PRPP legislation looming. There are many defined contribution or DC plans that are offered by different employers. DC plans come in many shapes and sizes. Many people are familiar with group RRSPs, as one example. Defined contribution plans are based on contributions—how much someone puts in. The benefit that is paid out at retirement is not guaranteed. It is subject to the will of the market. If the market plunges, so too does the benefit.

Defined benefit plans deliver a benefit to retirees based on a defined and guaranteed benefit. The benefit is secure and predictable. People can participate in their economic community freely when they trust what they have coming in. Defined contribution plans are insufficient in terms of providing for pensioners, and they are more costly to the system in the long term.

The shift from defined benefit to defined contribution is turning out to have been a short-sighted, corporate-driven, costly shift. DC plans are easier for employers, on the paperwork side of things, and shift the risk to employees. DC plans are tidier numbers to report to shareholders. As reports like HOOPP's Shifting Public Sector DB Plans to DC state, "If the motivation for a conversion to DC is to reduce costs, then it should be noted that shifting to DC actually increases the cost of delivering a comparable ... benefit."

Come to light, we are seeing the benefit—pardon the pun—in prioritizing DB plans over DC plans. Our hope is that the government will take counsel from those who are writing the reports and who actually, and actuarially, know about designing pensions.

In terms of design, the issue we have discussed in the greatest detail so far is the definition of a comparable plan. I'll refer back to the bill and to the basic requirements of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan schedule to elaborate on this issue. In order for an employee to be considered eligible, they must meet the following criteria and any other criteria specified by the not-yet-tabled next piece of legislation:

"(1) The individual is 18 years of age or older and under 70 years of age.

"(2) The individual is employed in Ontario and their employment is eligible employment.

"(3) The individual's annual salary and wages are above the minimum threshold....

"(4) The individual is not in receipt of a retirement benefit from the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

"(5) The individual does not participate in a comparable workplace pension plan as determined under the legislation referred to in subsection 1(2) of the act."

Let's look at number 5 again. To be eligible to contribute and benefit from this progressive and inclusive plan, the individual must not participate in "a comparable workplace pension plan." But what is "comparable"? What will disqualify someone from benefitting from this plan?

Again, let's look back at number 5. "Comparable" will be determined under the next piece of legislation. The bad news: We don't know what "comparable" means. The good news: neither does the government—yet. I know that the government is deep in consultation with some of the leading minds in the field of pensions and retirement security. I know because we have been as well. There are so many important things to consider. It is at least reassuring that the government hasn't made any rash decisions.

While it is still up for discussion, let us explore a few more ideas to consider when we are discussing comparability. What is "comparable"? As New Democrats, we were worried that comparability might be determined on the contribution side rather than the benefit side. While we never got an answer to our repeated inquiries on this matter in question period, we were glad to read in the Liberal discussion paper and to hear from the minister that defined contribution plans, or DC plans, will not be considered comparable and therefore disqualify their members from benefitting from this Ontario pension plan.

I would like to follow that up, though, with a reminder that my question from November remains unanswered on the order paper, and while the government might suggest it has been answered, after sitting across the room from this government and developing an appreciation for their understanding of commitment, you can appreciate why I might want it in writing.

With the amount of pressure that this government will no doubt be under from the banking and insurance lobbies, I know how tempting it might be to reverse that position and do a U-turn. Defined contribution plans are

not comparable. They must not be considered as such, no matter how tightly they put the screws to you.

Another issue with comparability: It says in the schedule that a worker may not "participate in a comparable workplace pension plan." My question is this: Are we only talking about plans or are we talking about people? Here's my point: Some might argue that, as a teacher, my plan would be considered comparable or better, and therefore disqualify me from participating. Some might argue that OMERS, a strong pension plan, would also be considered comparable. That seems to make sense from a plan-to-plan comparison standpoint. However, from a person-to-person point of view, imagine a part-time worker in an OMERS plan. That person would receive a significantly reduced amount compared with a full-time worker contributing to the same plan. That reduced amount is not sufficient to live on. So, do they deserve to be disqualified from participating in a plan that would allow them to live more securely?

Also, what about workers who have only paid into these comparable plans for a short period of time? Their pension benefit could be a pittance compared to someone else's in the same plan. I would urge the government to approach this question carefully.

This is what it looks like from here: It looks like the government is focusing on disqualifying people to reassure the business community that fewer and fewer people will be eligible to participate. I have suggested in this Legislature that the focus be on ways to include more and more people. If the goal is to provide more security, then do it. If the goal is to grow the pot of money for the future benefit of working Ontarians, then let more people participate.

What if a potentially exempt worker wants to pay in, wants to invest in Ontario? Will there be a way to voluntarily opt in? What if a worker who is close to retirement wants to pay more now to benefit more later? Will there be a way to top up and pay more in? What if a worker is part-time or recently enrolled in their current comparable pension plan and won't receive sufficient benefit? What added security can this plan offer them?

The old adage "The more the merrier" may not be entirely appropriate, but it worked for our health care system that was once universal, proud and strong. Since, it has been reduced, undermined and chipped away at by the federal and provincial governments. It is the average individual in Ontario who is now paying the price.

There is an opportunity here. The government should not be so quick to dismiss the arguments for universality. The logistics and administrative nightmare of tracking even one individual through their career of varied employment—eligible, ineligible, comparable, not comparable—that should be factored in.

It would seem that everyone in the country, with perhaps the exception of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, supports the expansion of the CPP. So, after the next federal election, when Tom Mulcair is at the helm, we'll be looking at different options for retirement, which will be great.

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate the glee from the other side at the prospect.

However, as I have said, the call from those interested in pensions is that this plan must mirror the CPP to the greatest extent possible. If it doesn't, rather than providing retirement security for more people, it might undermine the goal of expanding the CPP for all Canadians, and this can't happen.

We can see that there are tricky details to figure out, but starting at a place that is the most inclusive seems to be a good place to start. Everyone deserves the opportunity to live with dignity and security in their retirement. Perhaps the government might consider that everyone deserves the opportunity to participate and benefit in a plan that will ensure that security.

To the same end, the government needs to also consider portability. Job hopping seems to be the new norm for modern workers, and not necessarily voluntary job hopping. Trends show that the average worker tends to stay in one workplace for no more than five years. This means that as they move between workplaces, their pension needs to move with them; it needs to be portable. As new challenges arise, so do new questions, such as: How to handle workers who move in and out of the province? What will the effect be on workers who have a comparable pension who then move to a workplace that does not?

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I suspect the government has heard these concerns before, and I hope that they have been listening. As I've said before, we are lucky to have a breadth of expertise in this province that understands the implications of even the smallest of design features. Of course, the closer the plan is to the CPP, the less these concerns arise, and I hope the government understands that, as well.

Of the many design details that will be debated in the coming months and years, perhaps the one that requires the most delicacy is establishing the minimum earnings threshold. It is important that low-income Ontarians are given the opportunity to participate in the ORPP, but it is just as important that they can be included without being penalized through a reduction in their guaranteed income supplement or Ontario Guaranteed Annual Income System benefit. Though the minimum earnings threshold is not established in this bill beyond section 5, subsection 4 states that contributions shall be determined by applying the applicable contribution rate to the portion of the eligible employee's annual salary and wages between the minimum threshold and the maximum threshold. The consultation paper released by the government in December did state that to reduce the burden on lower-income workers, earnings below a certain threshold would be exempt from contributions, similar to the CPP. I'm pleased to see that the government is taking this into account. Simply being aware of the problem, however, does not necessarily ensure a solution.

Though I understand that the consultation process the government underwent was little more than a public rela-

tions exercise, I would refer them to the written submission provided by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives entitled *Getting the Design Right on the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan*, and I would advise them that there are some pretty amazing resources available to them that they should not gloss over so quickly. I will read a portion of the "Minimum threshold" section of that report:

"Prohibiting low-income workers from participating in the ORPP, which will increase the chances of living in poverty at retirement, is not the appropriate policy solution.

"The consultation paper identifies the impacts that the ORPP can have on low-income seniors in retirement. These impacts result from high tax back rates for the guaranteed income supplement (GIS). It also provides data showing that not all low-income earners end up low-income in retirement and not all higher-income earners are high-income in retirement.

"The potential impact of the ORPP results from the design of the GIS. It is not a problem created by the ORPP. And, therefore, the design of the ORPP cannot solve the problem. The best solution is to make changes in the GIS to reduce the tax back rate.

"An Ontario solution could ensure that low-income earners would not be contributing during their working lives to a pension plan that would be taxed back from them in retirement. It could take the form of a refundable tax credit payable to low-income individuals. Employers would continue to contribute on all pensionable earnings. Low-income employees would get contributions back at tax time. An existing mechanism that could be enhanced would be the working income tax benefit.

"The biggest challenge for this recommended mechanism would be the federal/provincial financial implications. For low-income earners, the tax credit would result in the premium being paid to and credited back by Ontario and then taxed back in retirement by the federal government through the GIS. As a result, Ontario revenues would be reduced to offset the sharp tax back of a federal program. This is why a reduction in the GIS tax back rate is the preferred option."

Mr. Speaker, we can see it's a complicated problem, but fortunately there are a multitude of experts who are ready and willing to offer insight wherever needed. The important part is that the government adheres to the principle of including low-income Ontarians without adding undue burden. Budgets are stretched thin enough as it is, and the ORPP needs to work with existing programs to ensure that there is no additional penalty.

Another concern we have with the design of the ORPP is a concerning little section in the 2014 budget, and our Conservative colleagues found it too. According to the 2014 budget, in the section entitled "Unlocking Value from Government Assets," the government presents the following:

"By unlocking value from its assets and encouraging more Ontarians to save through a proposed new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, new pools of capital would be

available for Ontario-based projects such as building roads, bridges and new transit. Our strong alternative financing and procurement model, run by Infrastructure Ontario, will allow for the efficient deployment of this capital in job-creating projects.”

Picking up the phone to say, “Hey, pension management”—

Interjections.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: “Hey”—

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Hey, what?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I’m just waiting.

Picking up the phone to say, “Hey, pension management team, we misjudged the cost of our transit project,” is not an acceptable practice. Pension plans operate with the sole objective of delivering a secure retirement for their members, and this sort of language from the government leads us to believe that they are less concerned with this principle than the dozen other holes they have dug for themselves.

We want guarantees that this pension pool will be further away than arm’s length. This money is for retirement security and retirement future, not for bankrolling more dysfunctional public-private partnership boondoggles or for sinking into more scandals. This government is notorious for throwing good money after bad. This pension plan must be stronger than gold-plated; it needs to be steel-walled against political sticky fingers. Guarantee that for the people of Ontario, please. There can’t be an emergency pension fund bat phone. Those who will be qualified and chosen to manage and administer this plan must be from the pension world, not the back rooms at Queen’s Park, and their goal must be to ensure retirement security, not financing campaign promises.

Speaking of those from the pension world, I would like to acknowledge the many and mighty pension experts and enthusiasts we have been able to meet with since the election. There are some wonderful minds in this field and we are glad that they are in consultation with the government. We would encourage the government to continue to meet with design experts, actuaries, plan administrators and pensioner groups long after the ORPP has been implemented.

We’ve had the opportunity to meet with pension academics, plan administrators, labour leaders, think tanks and pensioner groups. As I said earlier, I know the government has met with a number of the same people and I hope their messages and lessons resonated. Just in case they didn’t, I would point you to the written submissions provided by the Ontario Federation of Labour, CUPE and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives as shining examples of the available expertise. All three groups have consulted extensively, combining their own knowledge with the knowledge of others and the experiences of workers across the province. In fact, I’m pleased to see Steve Staples here, the OFL’s director of research and education and assistant to the president. Welcome.

Our pension system needs strengthening in a broader capacity. As we said earlier, the ORPP is a new piece, but it does not solve the other pension plan issues.

Thank you to those we have met with and continue to learn from and work with. Also, on a personal note, I’d like to acknowledge the work of my colleague from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek and our leader from Hamilton Centre, both of whom have worked diligently to advance the goal of a secure retirement for Ontarians. Also, thank you to our research team. Thanks to Ethan for everything he has invested through the years to ensure that more Ontarians retire with dignity.

But as we in this Legislature know, not everyone is on the same page. In the coming months, the government can expect to come up against massive opposition from the banking and insurance industries. But as I said before, banks and big business are doing just fine and they have no plan to retire any time soon. I imagine the government has immense pressure from the banks and insurance companies to make changes to grow their industry. We’re not interested in standing in the way of business, but we are very interested in workers and families and in the average individual who is trying to get by and hopefully get ahead.

The Bay Street lobby groups are pretty pleased that the government is rolling out the promised PRPP legislation so far ahead of any real ORPP legislation. The latter, as we see here, is little more than a shell game introduced by the government to distract Ontarians from the far more detailed private PRPP legislation that the government has tabled to appease the banks and insurance companies.

This isn’t an initiative, however, that will only impact big business. There isn’t anyone in this Legislature who will deny that a province-wide pension will have an impact on businesses. Our Conservative colleagues have said that this pension is going to be carried on the backs of the private sector. We have heard that it is business that creates wealth. We have heard from businesses that they will have to find the money somewhere to pay their ORPP contributions and will fire people, move businesses out of the country and stop donating to charities.

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If we’re going to speak in extremes, then I have a few to volunteer. Right now in this province the financial mistakes of this government are being carried by families across the province. Families are paying for hydro mismanagement and global debt repayment—not their debt repayment, but it’s on them. The OPSEU campaign we saw yesterday here at the doors of Queen’s Park that is asking, “What would you do with 8.2?” asks what the average person would do with \$8.2 billion in wasted money.

So, with people paying their own way and paying the government’s way out of the government’s hole, why are they now being threatened by a violent reaction from business for wanting to have secure retirements? If businesses alone create wealth, then what on earth are customers, patrons and clients for? It isn’t just people in stores that create business; it’s people spending money in stores that keeps the economic world turning.

We acknowledge a short-term impact, but what would be the impact of consumers holding onto their money because they don't have enough and can't rely on predictable income coming in? What's the impact on a business in the long term, and how many businesses fold because of an additional 1.9% versus how many businesses will fold if Ontarians are no longer able to participate in their economic community after retirement?

Why is everything here so short-sighted? Initiatives are either based on election cycles or immediate financial gains. Where is the big picture, long-term thinking that will save money in the long run? Everything is buy now and pay later. Where is the invest now, reap the benefit later? The Conservatives and business voices are saying that people aren't saving and that's their problem—that they should know better. Well, here we have a case of focus on the short-term instead of the long-term investment, and one would think that they should know better.

This plan isn't about undermining business. We're all part of an economic ecosystem. We work together. When we let it get out of whack, one part might benefit but another falters, and that isn't what's best for our communities. We have rich and dynamic business diversity in Oshawa, and I'm sure that that is true in communities across the province. I hope that more people will be able to frequent their local business establishments, appreciate their services, enjoy their products and invest in their business for many years to come. They are more likely to do it if we switch our thinking to long term and ensure that people have a predictable, steady income.

So full disclosure: I'm a fourth-generation public sector worker, I am a New Democrat and I am a staunch trade unionist. So as I'm sure people might guess, I have a set of progressive values, and pensions are right in line with my ideas about opportunities, human value and dignity. I have a hard time understanding the argument against pensions and retirement security, but here is some of what I have picked up along the way. I have heard that if people knew how to save, then they would. Related to that, I have heard that we need to teach financial literacy to address the savings crisis. I have heard that if people learn to eat well and live well, then they would have more money. I heard yesterday that we need to focus on building home equity.

I am all about education, and I remember learning in high school about compound interest and how it could work for or how it could work against you. I thought of that lesson when I was forced to live off of credit cards for a time. I fully understood the situation. But this isn't about me.

I would like to share the story of an Oshawa couple in their late twenties and their new, young daughter. As Jesse shared with our office, "For our family, savings isn't an option." Jesse and Savanah are students in Oshawa who attend Durham College and UOIT, respectively. They're also young parents of a two-and-a-half-year-old. Jesse and Savanah both work part time, volunteer in the community development sector, attend full-

time classes and try to spend every spare moment that they have with their toddler. Their income is largely subsidized by student loans, with a combined debt load of \$70,000. Savanah put her name on the waiting list for subsidized child care the day after she found out she was having a baby, about three and a half years ago. They didn't get a spot until this past September. Before they received a child care subsidy, they were spending \$200 a week on private child care for a babysitter.

After rent, utilities, food and clothing are paid for, some months they end up pulling in less than they owe. Their family income is less than \$20,000 a year, and when the temperatures drop, the increase in heating bills gobbles up any leftover disposable income.

When they can, they support their parents, too, who are also dealing with issues such as long-term disabilities and financial problems.

Saving for retirement is simply not an option. They understand all too well how to bargain-shop, cut costs and do more with less. It isn't a matter of a lack of financial literacy or hard work. Between school, volunteering and working, Jesse and Savanah are both working more than 50 hours per week.

In an economy increasingly producing short-term, part-time, precarious employment with no benefits, and the cost of education, child care, and the basic necessities of life such as food getting higher and higher, their prospects for saving for retirement are grim. That is why an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and an increased CPP is essential for the long-term financial security for working-class families. Jesse and Savanah aren't looking for a handout; they're just looking to be treated fairly in an increasingly unfair economy. They are looking for a way to get ahead. I don't know if their story is that different from others across the province.

Mr. Speaker, with how complicated the world is these days, I would say that most young people today could teach the older dogs some new tricks about stretching a dollar, creative budgeting or sacrifice. They can't imagine a time when home ownership was a possibility. They won't likely have a job for more than a few years. They can't afford tuition repayments, transit, rent and life, so they might have to stay living with their parents. These are choices other generations didn't necessarily have to make. It isn't fair to compare then and now and measure today by yesterday's yardstick; it is fair to look at now and fix it for the future.

I would challenge the Conservatives to revamp their arguments to reflect the reality facing the whole community and not just their immediate neighbours.

I am pleased to be able to stand in this proud Legislature and speak about pensions, and I thank the member opposite for the opportunity to speak today. Coming out of the public sector, specifically education, I do know the value of a pension. Pensioners know the value of a pension, and those who work and wonder how they will survive or thrive after their working years know the value of a pension.

As New Democrats, we have always and will always continue to believe that all Ontarians should have access to a strong defined benefit pension plan, and for those who don't have one, it is our duty as representatives of this province to provide it. We want Ontarians to have good pensions. A good pension is a safe, protected, low-cost vehicle not only for individuals to save money but for employers to add to that savings, and for those protected savings to grow and eventually provide benefits and financial predictability and security into retirement.

Ben Franklin is quoted as saying: "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes." With all due respect to Mr. Franklin, I would add to that. What I know to be certain is that life is full of surprises. Expect the unexpected. That sounds fun until you have to pay for those surprises. People know that life will happen, and if they don't have money in the bank or money coming in, they will live in dread of the next surprise that means they won't be able to pay their bills or feed themselves.

Mr. Speaker, life doesn't stop at retirement. People with a predictable income can make plans. People with a predictable income can spend some of it. People with a predictable income can live more freely and participate in their economy, whether that means seeing a movie with a friend or planning a trip. People with a predictable income won't lie awake at night dreading what the future might bring.

People still want to participate in their communities after they retire. They want to be secure. People will want to know that there is money and that they have health and wellness support as they age and improve. Hard-working Ontarians are going to retire eventually, and all of them deserve to work and retire with dignity.

So there is a lot of work to be done. We all agree on the importance of retirement security, but as we all know, the devil is in the details, so we'll look forward to seeing more of the details of this plan and we will fight to ensure that the plan is strong, progressive and available to as many Ontarians as possible. As a New Democrat, I know the value of a strong defined benefit pension, and we hope that the government does too.

Thank you very much.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the member from Oshawa for her presentation. I know that, as the critic for this file, she is very focused on this particular issue, and I appreciate her passion for pensions. I want to thank her for coming to the first official consultation we held in Kingston. It was great to have you there and to really hear all sides of this very important issue. I want to thank the honourable member for Kingston and the Islands for hosting us. It really was a terrific debate, and it really underscores the complexity of this issue.

It is important, Speaker, as we're moving forward with this legislation, that we really consider the feedback we

have received in the consultation process, because we have been out listening to Ontarians, asking for their input as we consider the key design features of this plan. But one thing is very sure, and I think the member opposite has really spoken very well to it, and that is the value of a pension to people and ensuring that, in Ontario, we do what we can to strengthen the Ontario retirement system. That's exactly what we are doing by introducing Bill 56, with the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. It is ensuring that when people retire, they can retire with some comfort and dignity.

I do want to point out one aspect of the legislation, just to assure the member opposite that we are very concerned about the sustainability of this plan and ensuring that the benefits of this plan are for the members of the plan. It does say: "The administrative entity shall hold the contributions, and any accruals from the investments, in trust for the members and other beneficiaries of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. The contributions and the accruals shall not form part of the Consolidated Revenue Fund." That was included in this framework legislation for that reason.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I listened with great interest to the comments from the member from Oshawa. A little disturbing—I mean, we seem to take a kick at our banks every chance we get. We have the privilege, in this country, of having one of the better banking systems in the world. I look around at some of the investments people have made over the years and have suffered. People had what seemed to be successful companies, like General Motors, Air Canada—you can go through some of the companies that people trusted and thought they would last forever. That's one benefit we have with investing in our banks.

One thing that does scare our party is that we're talking about these deductions going into the coffers of our government, and this government seems to have the idea that it just continues borrowing. It looks at this money as not going into investments. It's being taken into a pool of money they can spend on infrastructure, because they can no longer borrow any more money for these projects. It concerns me, because you look at countries around the world now, like the country of Greece, which went through this. People that had pensions in Greece lost their pensions. This is not a guarantee just because the government says they're going to pay pensions in the future. If they don't spend wisely, the money won't be there.

We see examples. We look at the unrest in Greece, where they're upset with the fact that the past record of spending has meant embarrassment and lack of funds. Now they're relying on other suppliers of funding—Germany and these companies that came to bat for them—to come to bat again.

These pensions are richer than they are in these countries where they're asking for help. I think we have to wake up to the fact that there's a limit to the amount of

capital there. We're punishing private sector companies that are trying to make a go here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to commend the member from Oshawa for a really good debate on Bill 56. It's an important bill. It's probably one of the more important things this government has proposed. I know that we proposed this back in 2010; we talked about an Ontario pension plan. So it's good that they're actually bringing it to light.

Financial security is a concern for everyone, and more and more so when our future doesn't look like people can save on their own because of the lack of job prospects that are out there because of the poor management with the deficit that we have with this government that's displayed. So it is important that people have security, and this is a step in the right direction.

I'm also questioning why three phases, but I guess we'll see how they roll out, phase by phase. It will be interesting to find out—the second phase is supposed to establish an arm's-length administrative body to handle benefit and administration and asset management. The third, I understand, is going to detail the specific design features of the plan.

What would be nice is to get some preamble to what that would look like so that the critic, who was very well educated on the subject, and perhaps the critic from the Conservatives as well, could maybe have some productive feedback now, as opposed to after the fact.

We had consultations on the pension plan. I understand the critic invited herself to Kingston. Those are public consultations. You need to be more inclusive. Regardless if you're a majority or minority, we are here to represent the constituents of our riding, and we have productive, progressive feedback. We presented the Ontario pension plan in 2010. It's not a new concept to the NDP. The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is very passionate about it, so please consult with the other members on this side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The honourable transportation minister.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm delighted to have the opportunity to speak this afternoon on such an important issue. It's the first opportunity I've had to speak here in the Legislature since we returned after the winter break.

This is a very, very important issue. I had the chance to listen, of course, to the member from Oshawa and the member from Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry—is that right? Close enough?—and also the member from London—Fanshawe in the course of the discussion this afternoon. But of course, as well, I had the chance to listen to my colleague, the minister responsible for this particular issue.

In all of the discussion it kind of took me back to the very grand consultation that we all had with the people of Ontario last May and June. In fact, I think of my own community of Vaughan and all of the opportunities that I had, in particular to talk to the seniors in my community

who expressed their concern about what might be coming next for those who would be following in their footsteps, for their children and grandchildren. The issue of retirement security and income security into their retirement years for their kids and grandkids was particularly important to them. They were delighted to hear that we put forward, under the leadership of Premier Wynne, a plan to move forward with enhancing the situation in future years for retirement security. It was extremely disappointing for them to hear at that time that both opposition parties stood in stark contrast to us on this particular item.

I can think of no other individual other than my colleague the member from Scarborough—Guildwood, the Associate Minister of Finance responsible for this particular very important issue, who is leading province-wide consultations and who is doing an extraordinary job. I hope at some point soon this minister will have the opportunity to come to York region—to come to Vaughan, specifically—to talk to those in my community for whom this is a very, very important issue.

But it does bear repeating: We need to have the debate. We need to have the discussion, as we are here in the Legislature today, but we need to get on with moving forward with this plan. Certainly, under this minister's leadership, I know that we will deliver a strong retirement security plan—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Oshawa has two minutes.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I appreciate the thoughtful comments from my colleagues in the Legislature. That was my very first time giving a full hour lead. An hour is a long time, and my throat is on fire. Anyway, thank you very much.

Interestingly, as my colleague from London—Fanshawe pointed out, this is the first of three parts. So part of that will be the exciting opportunity to have this debate a few more times. This hour is not the first; it will be the first of three that we'll be giving on this topic, so you may hear some of these things again.

I thank the Associate Minister of Finance for her comments. I'm glad to be reassured that the money that's going into the pension is going to be kept separately in a little box that is safe. So if we can hear more about that and be guaranteed of that, it would be great.

Thank you to the member from Stormont-Dundas—South Glengarry. Thank you for mentioning Oshawa and GM. I'll take this opportunity to mention the fact that GM's new announcement of its investment in Ingersoll affects us in Oshawa directly, because now some of our pensioners can sleep at night knowing that their pensions are at least secure for the next stretch of time, as GM has committed to continue to do business in Canada. We're pleased to know that.

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Something else the member from London—Fanshawe had mentioned about the government being more inclusive: I know that they're in consultation right now with many different people. As I said before, I encourage

them to continue that process through this and certainly long after the ORPP is implemented but to be inclusive from the get-go.

The Minister of Transportation: As you said, this is your government's plan to move forward, and we look forward to it actually moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Mr. Speaker, before I start, I just want to make mention that I will be sharing my time with my esteemed colleague the member from Scarborough—Agincourt. I want to take this opportunity to wish her and her community a happy new year. So happy new year to her and her community.

It truly gives me great pleasure to speak on this very important bill. As much as I am pleased to be back here in the House, I do want to say that I really did enjoy my time during the recent constituency break. It gives me great pleasure when I get an opportunity to be in my community, meeting with the various organizations. I had an opportunity to visit with many of the schools in Davenport and, more importantly, meet with many of the constituents in Davenport. So a big shout-out to them. It was very nice to meet with all of you.

I'm happy to be back here and get important work done for Ontarians. I'm very happy to rise this afternoon to discuss such an important piece of legislation which will affect the way Ontarians save for their retirement in a meaningful way.

Ontario is taking an important step in helping millions of people save for their retirement by introducing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014. The ORPP is one of the centrepieces of the 2014 budget, and this legislation puts the framework of our plan in place and provides us with the necessary tools to implement the plan by January 2017.

This legislation would help create a savings tool for the people of this province, designed to give people a secure floor they can rely on. It's an investment in our collective futures and a chance to give Ontarians the retirement security they deserve.

This legislation would, if passed, require the establishment of the ORPP by January 1, 2017, and set out the basic parameters of the plan, including equal contributions from employees and employers, capped at 1.9% each on an employee's annual earnings of up to \$90,000. It would also ensure that contributions will be invested by an organization at arm's length from the government. The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan also ensures that benefits would be indexed to inflation to provide a predictable source of retirement income for life.

It is important to understand what the implementation of this legislation means. This bill provides further detail about participation and benefits. Specifically, it would give authority to the government to request and collect information, such as personal information, for the purposes of establishing the plan. Once in place, the ORPP will give people a predictable source of retirement

income for life, something they can rely on so they can better enjoy their golden years.

An important part of the process for the implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is the process of consultations that the Associate Minister of Finance has completed. Associate Minister Hunter has engaged with people across the province to hear their views on the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

Minister Hunter has engaged extensively with stakeholders, and consistent among her conversations is agreement that people are not saving enough for retirement, a problem that has the potential to impact everyone. There was a study that was released this week by Sun Life that showed that a growing number of Canadians believe they won't be financially prepared to retire at 65.

Already, in initial conversations with businesses, labour organizations and individuals, we've heard some great feedback on how this plan should be rolled out. In fact, in the past month, two studies from the Conference Board of Canada and Manulife have reiterated that sentiment. According to a poll released by RBC recently, only 39% of respondents put money away for retirement in 2014. Further, 30% of respondents have not yet begun saving at all.

Similarly, economists, like the former governor of the Bank of Canada, David Dodge, have told us that the implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will be good for the economy in the long run.

In the coming weeks, a consultation paper will be released on the key design details of the plan. The consultation paper will look at some of the key design details of the ORPP, and we'll be able to provide you with more details in the coming weeks as that is rolled out.

I'd like to now talk about the ORPP in relation to our economy and small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, small businesses are a crucial part of our province's economic growth and well-being. In my riding of Davenport, we've got many great small businesses which make our community a more vibrant and bustling place. So many neighbourhoods are tied together by dynamic small businesses, like Corso Italia, Bloor-dale, West Queen West, the Junction Triangle and Little Portugal. Walking along many of these neighbourhoods, especially over the last few weeks when we had the constit time off, it is easy to see how integrated and essential these small businesses are to our community. It's so important. Many of them are owned and run by our local residents, and they are people who dedicate their lives and are truly invested in their local community. I know that two favourites for my staff are Brock Sandwich and Holy Oak, where we get yummy sandwiches and great espressos and cappuccinos. These small businesses are vital to all communities, and I know they exist across the province.

It takes a lot of courage to start your own business. It is absolutely vital for the government to support these individuals and organizations.

The ORPP is certainly not a tax on these businesses but a vehicle to help individuals save for their retirement. It's also an investment in the long-term health of our economy.

We know that people are not saving enough for retirement. I gave you numbers just a while ago. Only 39% of respondents put away money for retirement in 2014. If this trend continues, individuals will face lower standards of living, their consumption in retirement may decrease, and they may rely more on publicly funded programs. That's not good for people, that's not good for business, and that's certainly not good for the economy.

The ORPP would help correct a problem we see emerging on the horizon. What David Dodge has told us is that the long-term benefits will outweigh the short-term costs. That's good for all businesses, including small businesses.

Employees who feel more secure about their futures tend to be more productive. More than that, we know that businesses care about the well-being of the people who work for them. The ORPP would be a cost-effective way of helping give workers the secure retirement floor they can rely on so that all of us can rest assured about our collective futures.

It is also important to remember that the ORPP isn't being introduced in isolation. Our government is continuing to work to balance the budget and offer assistance to our province's small businesses. We know that the cost and administrative burden of some workplace pension plans can make it difficult for many small employers to provide them to employees. What the ORPP could do is allow these employers to compete with larger employers for talent and retention by being able to offer employees a retirement benefit program.

To help businesses adjust, the ORPP would be implemented in 2017 to coincide with the expected reductions in employment insurance premiums. In addition, enrolment would occur in stages, beginning with the largest employers, and contributions would be phased in over two years.

Our government's commitment to balancing the budget would not be impacted by the implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. While it is true that the ORPP would require additional contributions from all affected employers, including those funded by the government, improving retirement income security is important to future retirees and for the future prosperity of the province. In other words, higher savings today would mean greater incomes and consumption in the future, improving job and economic growth in the long term. More retirement savings now would also mean more capital being available for investment, which, in turn, would increase productivity and improve economic growth and job creation.

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The ORPP would address the under-saving challenge and would expand pension coverage in Ontario at a time when workplace pension coverage is low, and oftentimes non-existent.

The ORPP would reduce the potential savings gap many workers face in retirement, across the province and in my riding of Davenport.

I'm happy I could speak on this very important piece of legislation, which, if passed, will take important steps to help Ontarians save for their retirement and enjoy their golden years. Many seniors in my riding of Davenport met with me to explain how they are struggling to make ends meet. This is clearly due to insufficient retirement savings.

This is about balancing the needs of today's workforce against the needs of an aging population. The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is about securing our collective futures so we can all rest assured. That's why we're taking action now to ensure a strong economy for the future.

Once again, I'm happy to be back in the House and I look forward to getting important work done, not only for my constituents in Davenport but across this great province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to follow my colleague from Davenport, and thank you for the best wishes for my coming new year, starting tonight. As all of us celebrate the lunar new year, I want to wish everybody a happy new year. Gong Hay Fat Choy.

I'm very pleased to see my colleague the associate minister, who was present here today throughout the debate on Bill 56. I also want to say that the debate on Bill 56 tonight is very timely, because all of us right now are talking about the RSP season. I know everybody in this House is talking about it with their children and with their family, how you're going to contribute in a very short time. So it's very appropriate, as the government right now, to debate this particular bill, because we know—you heard the statistics this afternoon, Mr. Speaker—how many Ontarians are not saving appropriately for their retirement.

My colleague earlier talked about the different studies being presented. I want to share with the audience today who are watching that there are many reasons why people are not contributing to their pension plan. The workplace pension plan is very low and getting lower. Two thirds of Ontarians don't have a workplace pension plan, and that's a concern. We know that voluntary savings vehicles are not enough. The word "voluntary" means that you have a choice.

In 2012, there was \$280 billion in unused RRSP room in Ontario. That's a lot of billion dollars unused out there. At the same time, the CPP is not enough to live on. In 2012, the average benefit paid by the CPP was only \$6,800. As a member from the Toronto area, this is an unacceptable amount. You cannot even pay your rent, let alone have a healthy, balanced cost of living.

Together this means that a growing number of Ontarians, especially in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, are aging and at risk of facing declining standards of living as they retire. This threatens both the

economy as well as consumption, because seniors do actually contribute to the economy. That's a concern for me in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. We heard today from my colleague opposite in the third party as well as my colleague here from Davenport: That's not good for the economy, and it's definitely not good for retired seniors.

This proposed legislation, if passed, would create a savings tool for people in this province designed to give them more security as they retire.

I want to share with the members in the House but also with those who are watching today that in the proposed legislation, in the preamble—I want to thank the associate minister for this—it states very, very clearly: “The government of Ontario is taking a leadership role in addressing this pressing issue by proposing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, a new mandatory provincial pension plan that would enable Ontario workers to build a more secure retirement future. It would be the first of its kind in Canada and would build on key features of the Canada Pension Plan.”

If the federal government had demonstrated leadership and co-operation working with our government, we would not be here presenting and debating Bill 56. We know the government and the Premier have reached over to ask to work with the federal government. There was no extended olive branch on this piece.

In the preamble it is very clearly stated: “The government of Ontario is committed to ensuring that the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is administered by an entity with a strong governance structure and investment strategy to ensure that the plan is efficiently managed, accountable, transparent and fair.”

Mr. Speaker, during the last couple of weeks I was travelling with the finance committee, as you know, across Ontario to hear about the pre-budget consultations. We heard a presentation about this particular bill and support for the bill. I also want to remind the viewers, as well as those opposition members, that this is not a tax. I know some of the opposition members believe this is a tax. That is absolutely not true. The ORPP is a vehicle to help individuals—Ontarians—save for their retirement. It is an investment in the long-term health of our economy and making sure seniors are retiring with adequate income and, at the same time, that they have security.

The other piece here I want to share with members of the House about this particular proposed legislation and the ORPP is that we are going to be using the existing infrastructures, where possible, to ensure more cost-effective implementation of the ORPP. In particular, we will be leveraging the expertise from the Ontario public sector pension plan and our strong financial services sector. As all of us know, Ontario is the engine when it comes to financial security and the financial sector. We will be working with the federal government, even though they are refusing to work with us, when necessary, to ensure there's a seamless delivery of this plan for Ontarians as well as businesses.

As I said earlier, the preamble of the proposed legislation, Bill 56, is about the arm's-length relationship and the governance structure. It's very, very important that Ontarians know the proposed ORPP contributions will be managed by an independent body that has an arm's-length relationship with the government. This strong governance model would be put in place for managing investments associated with the annual contribution, like we're doing now very shortly. Ontarians and Canadians across the country will be contributing to their RRSPs, and this is no different than what we would be doing in the future.

In addition, we will be considering leveraging Ontario's strong financial services sector and Ontario's proposed new asset pooling entity in the administration of the plan and investment management. Again, like I said before, we are reaching out to the federal government and hopefully they are listening because at the end of the day we're not competing with them; we want to work with them to create a secure Ontario.

I know the associate minister has already completed most of the consultation about this particular bill. We have heard feedback in terms of how to improve the bill, but heard from Ontarians—heard it very clear—that we need this kind of pension plan to support their retirement.

We also solicited expertise from the former CEO of OMERS, Michael Nobrega, in his role as the implementation lead, in terms of providing guidance and support in implementing the ORPP, because we know he has the expertise. He knows how to deal with the administration of this particular fund. Most importantly, he will provide the guidance and support for the government as we move into 2017. I know the associate minister is working very hard to ensure this particular bill carries through.

I also want to thank the third party. I heard the comments from my colleague from Oshawa as a new member. She was very eloquent in her presentation for 60 minutes on this particular Bill 56. I know the third party is very supportive of Bill 56. More importantly, they also recognize that their members, like our members, are supportive of Bill 56 because at the end of the day we have seniors in all ridings of the province and they are asking us to ensure their retirement years are secure, but, most importantly, that they have some tools and support from the government.

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In the final minute, I want to say to the official opposition party—I know they consistently use the words, “This is a tax,” etc. That is absolutely not accurate. We know Ontarians are not saving. At the end of the day, it is leadership by this Premier, by our government, bringing forward this proposed legislation.

It is clearly written in our bill and also in our throne speech. It is also in the 2014 budget. I would encourage everyone to take this opportunity to read the bill thoroughly.

I was encouraged by the comments I heard this afternoon from the third party. I'm also looking forward to hearing my colleague from the official opposition party.

He and I travelled, in the last couple of weeks, with the finance committee. I know he has seniors in his riding. They, too, are looking for security from the government. They, too, expect the government to lead on this particular issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, I do have seniors in my riding. Sadly, this has absolutely nothing to do with them because it will be 40 years before anybody does see any limited benefit from this. I appreciate her bringing up the seniors. This pension tax will not help the seniors today. I must correct her.

In fact, it's also important to remind that with this pension tax, there is no government money in it. This is money from employees; this is money from employers. It's an awful misunderstanding if people think that there is any government money. This is strictly a pension tax.

I must say to the member that she must have gone to different pre-budget consultation meetings than I went to, because I heard loudly and clearly from the Ontario hotel and restaurant association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce—and the list goes on and on and on of companies who stood in front of us and talked about how this pension tax is going to cripple business and ruin the economy of Ontario. That is really the tone and tenor of the meetings that I attended, which I think were the same meetings that she attended.

We had Professor Ian Lee from the Sprott School of Business discuss what this will do to the economy and how it will affect low-income earners, as well. I'll be talking more about that in the next 20 minutes that I have.

On this pension tax, I am going to disclose much of the information from the people who did indeed present to the pre-budget consultations, and I'll be doing that in the next couple of minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Davenport and the member from Scarborough–Agincourt in their summation of the ORPP.

It is interesting. The Auditor General has said that the level of underfunding of pension plans has gotten steadily worse over the past decade, so this does appear to be a response to some of those long-standing criticisms of the Auditor General for not having a very progressive plan. It's great that the government has come forward with an idea to plan for the long term and that you've listened to the Auditor General.

Where we have some concerns, though, and this will be a long-standing issue, is that there's a categorization that you're going to unlock the value from these assets to invest in Ontario-based infrastructure projects. To use this fund to fund infrastructure—you can see why we have some trust issues on this. The Auditor General, who you listened to on pension development, has also said that you need to rethink public-private partnerships, to

the tune of \$8.2 billion. We have a concern with that, because you wouldn't be looking for other revenue streams like the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan if you actually did a thorough review of the P3 mechanism, which you are apparently quite enamoured with. The Auditor General? Not so much. Us? Not so much. We see \$8.2 billion as being a substantial amount of money which could actually go to a number of issues that Ontarians are facing today, which we heard about in the finance committee as we travelled around the province—around poverty reduction, around the high cost of energy. Obviously, when you do invest in infrastructure you create jobs, so there is a cycle here that is concerning to us.

We agree; pension security is an important issue. It's a long-standing principle of ours. We look forward to making this piece of legislation stronger, but we have some outstanding concerns, which we will bring to the fore.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Merci, monsieur le Président. J'ai le plaisir maintenant d'adresser ce projet de loi, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014. I must say, Speaker, it's a particular pleasure to speak while you're officiating today. As you'll note, page Ishani, who is seated next to you, will tell you about some of her own neighbourhood in Etobicoke North.

In my community, for individuals who are looking at this legislation and some of its parameters and some of the initiatives, I think it's going to be very, very welcome there, because we know, as my honourable colleagues from Davenport and Scarborough–Agincourt have mentioned, there is a substantial underfunding, both personal as well as public, with regard to pension savings.

I might add, perhaps following from my honourable colleague from Scarborough–Agincourt, a nurse, and as an MD myself, that one of the great successes of medical and public health care over the last 100 years is the increase of life expectancy. Speaker, as you may know, if you were born in Canada in 1900, as a male, life expectancy was about maybe 47 to 52 years of age. If you're born today, it's something on the order of about 83 years and growing. Of course, for women, it's even higher.

We are at this most interesting stage where we are outliving our savings—and by the way, outliving other things too, including the calcium of our bones and all the rest of it—but we, as a government, have to take initiatives and steps to address that. That's why we're very pleased to have the Honourable Mitzi Hunter as our Associate Minister of Finance, who has been given charge of this mandate of the ORPP Act.

I would urge my colleagues opposite, even the Tories, to please support this particular act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to address the comments by the members from Davenport and Scarborough—Agincourt on their speeches today in the House. We differ on this.

You know what I find strange about the government over there? When Jack Mintz came out with papers that were supportive of something the government was doing, my God, they couldn't say his name often enough. It was Jack Mintz, Jack Mintz, Jack Mintz over and over and over again. But on this pension plan, I haven't heard them mention Jack Mintz.

Jack Mintz is a world-renowned economist, as you know. But he thinks this pension plan is a lot of hooey because, first of all, they haven't defined anything about who is going to be exempt from this. But if you are a member of this plan, you've got to pay into it for 40 years to collect—if you're making \$90,000 a year, you're going to have to pay 40 years to collect \$12,000 a year.

Now, I'm not going to be in the plan, so I guess it doesn't matter to me. But it does matter to a lot of people I know, like my kids and my grandkids, who haven't started working yet, but when they do—well, who knows what Ontario is going to look like if these people are still in charge when my grandkids are looking for a job? But with this plan, as Jack Mintz said, you've got it all wrong. You're taking money out of the pockets of individual workers and you're taking money away from employers, and you're taking it to finance your pet projects. What are you going to do with that money?

We don't trust this government when it comes to that money. They're going to take that fund and they're going to spend it on Liberal pet projects—that's not going to be protected. We know that, and the people of Ontario know that, and it's time for you to come clean.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough—Agincourt has two minutes to reply to those lovely comments.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to wrap up this particular section of the debate. I want to thank the members from Davenport, Nipissing, Kitchener—Waterloo, Etobicoke North and Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke.

I am going to take from the good doctor from Etobicoke North because we know we have the facts. To the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke: I'm very sorry. We deliver facts. We're based on evidence, okay? The evidence tells us very clearly that Ontarians are living longer, and the data shows that many of them are outliving their savings. So that's what the evidence is.
1750

So please do not do the fearmongering, and tell the truth. Because we know facts. This is evidence-based. We have evidence that shows—former bank governor Dodge talked about this issue. People are not saving. This is good for the economy. It is making sure people retire with security. We have seen in our communities how many seniors are living off food banks and, more importantly, depending on others for everyday living.

At the end of the day, yes, to this member opposite, it may not be applying to you. We're talking about the

future. We're talking about a future with security. That's what leadership is about.

More importantly, we have publicly stated our intent, both in our throne speech and in the 2014 budget. It is pretty explicit, the entire bill by the associate minister, and it clearly lays out what we plan to do in terms of administration.

So please be accurate with the information and be accurate in terms of sharing that information.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, let me give you some facts. I know I've only got what looks like nine minutes now—robbed of my 20 minutes today.

Let's talk a little bit about who's been weighing in on this. We'll start with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce says, "To this point, we're not really convinced that the ORPP is the best solution for the so-called retirement income challenge.... Mainly, the chamber and our members have been worried about the potential negative impacts of the ORPP on the business climate." We'll get to some of those impacts in the last minute. "We're convinced that the ORPP shouldn't go ahead. We really want to see the government come out with an economic impact analysis of how the ORPP will impact Ontario's economy." This is the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. They also go on to say, "Many businesses are worried about the costs it will impose." As it moves forward towards implementing this new pension plan, "the government must conduct and publish an economic analysis" of the business.

Why is the chamber of commerce so worried, Speaker? I can tell you, their brand new Emerging Stronger 2015 document came out last week, which was obviously quite a shock to most people in Ontario and especially the Liberal government.

In 2012, when asked, "Do you believe the Ontario economy is going in the right or wrong direction?" Some 41% agreed it was going in the right direction. Last year, 42%—it grew a per cent—believed the economy was heading in the right direction. But last week, 29%—the number has plummeted—believed the economy is headed in the right direction.

When they talk about "How confident are you in your organization's economic outlook?"—again, two years ago, it was 72%, it grew to 74%, and it plummeted to 58%.

"How confident are you in the Ontario economy right now?" From 44% to 48%—tumbled to 29%. In every single one of the metrics, the confidence of Ontario businesses has tumbled based on the fact that this government is talking about introducing an ORPP and a carbon tax.

Let's go to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Implementation of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan: "Do you support the implementation?" The percentage: 86% of Ontario businesses in the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said no. "If implemented, what impact would paying additional ORPP premiums have on your business?" Sixty-nine per cent

said that they would freeze or cut salaries; 53% said they would reduce the number of employees; and 52% said they would reduce investments in their business.

This analysis tells us exactly what the business community is thinking about. They're talking about cutting people. I can tell you that it's not just the business community that's talking about cutting people. It's our own Liberal government. In the Confidential Advice to Cabinet, under the "not recommended" category, any increase in taxes would have negative, long-run, macro-economic impacts on the GDP and employment. In fact, their own Liberal document, the Confidential Advice to Cabinet, says that payroll taxes would have the "largest negative impact" on employment. They go a little farther to say, "Give us the economic impact of raising \$2 billion annually by this payroll tax." They talk about it costing 18,000 jobs for every \$2 billion. So if this is a \$6-billion program it would cost us 54,000 jobs. In fact, if you look at the long-term behavioural impact, it states here, "lower business investment, relocation of business to other jurisdictions, reduced work effort, out-migration of people." That is what the Ministry of Finance's own document said will happen.

Jack Mintz does bring an interesting perspective that you talked about. This is what he presented to the pre-budget consultation committee that the member from Agincourt was talking about—here's a quote from Ian Lee from Carleton University: "The final point I want to make is why it doesn't address low-income Canadians. Every person below the poverty line—the 20% of elders below the poverty line are getting the guaranteed income supplement" today. "It will be clawed back \$1 for \$1 from every future Ontario pension plan dollar they get. In other words, you are not going to be benefiting the low-income seniors because they will not get one ... new dollar." For every dollar you tax them in their youth, they get a dollar clawed back from their guaranteed income supplement.

We've got Jack Mintz's comments as well, where he says, "The best research has been done by Statistics Canada and McKinsey with large surveys...." They are saying that a scalpel is needed, not a sledgehammer.

So let me conclude, Speaker, in the moments that I have. Basically, if the issue is, as the McKinsey and Co. study that just came out last Thursday stated, 83% of Canadians are on track to maintain their standard of living, then let's have a program that focuses on the 17% as opposed to imposing a burden on the whole of our economy. If this group needs help, then let's help. But let's not use a sledgehammer to squash an ant. That is exactly what's happening to punish the 83% to fix the 17%. When you look at the McKinsey study—I'll read you that final point. McKinsey and Co. came out just last week and said that "the findings suggest many people are worrying needlessly." A vast majority of Canadians are saving enough for retirement.

Again, if we've got 83% who are, let's fix it for the 17% rather than dragging down our entire economy. Our entire economy is in jeopardy. The Ministry of Finance's own documents tell us that the entire economy is in jeopardy with losing 18,000 jobs for every \$2 billion you take out of the economy. This is something that is almost cataclysmic to the business community, when you've got 89% of the business community not wanting this tax.

Anecdotally, when we were on our tour of the pre-budget consultations, I can tell you that a business owner in London with 15 employees said, "Basically, I'm going to fire one of my employees and use that salary to pay the other 14." That's exactly what the Ministry of Finance heard as well.

I thank you for my time, Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
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Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
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Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
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McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
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Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vermile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
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Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

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Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Mike Colle, Grant Crack
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Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
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Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
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la justice**

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Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
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**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
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Bill Walker
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Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
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Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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First Session, 41st Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

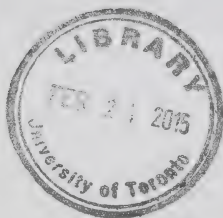
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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 19 February 2015

Jeudi 19 février 2015



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 19 February 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 19 février 2015

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (MAKING ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFER), 2015 LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE TRANSPORT (ACCROÎTRE LA SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE EN ONTARIO)

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 17, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / *Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2012 sur l'autoroute 407 Est et le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When this item of business was last debated, the member from Ottawa—Orléans had the floor with six minutes and 15 seconds remaining. She also indicated that she would be sharing her time with the member from Ottawa South.

The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I want to thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans for sharing her time with me.

It's a pleasure to speak today to Bill 31, and I'd like to congratulate the minister for bringing forward this bill. It's a very important bill that deals with public safety.

In this bill we have a number of measures to deal with truck and bus safety, pedestrian safety, cycling safety, distracted driving, impaired driving and driving with medical conditions. So as legislators, this is a bill that's very important and central to our key role in representing the people who elected us, which is public safety. Our key role is to ensure that the public are safe, and in listening to the debate yesterday—or the day before, I believe—all members in this Legislature understand how central and key that responsibility is.

I'd like to pick up on a few of the remarks made by the member from Ottawa—Orléans. I think she said—she mentioned to me yesterday as well—that a car is like a

weapon, in a sense. You're driving around a tonne—2,500 pounds—of metal at fairly high rates of speed at times, and even at a low rate of speed you can do a lot of damage. I think the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke gave a description the other day of two cars coming at each other at 90 kilometres an hour and the kind of force that would be felt when they collide.

Operating a motor vehicle is a very serious responsibility. I read an interesting fact: Fatalities caused by distracted driving may exceed fatalities caused by impaired driving as early as next year, which is a pretty sobering thought. And in listening to the debate yesterday, many of the members spoke about distracted driving, highlighting something they were very concerned about. So I would like to speak a little bit about distracted driving.

But first I would like to go back to how we view impaired driving in our society. Right now, when you talk about impaired driving or a conviction for impaired driving—I think the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke described it as people being shunned. I'm not quite sure if it's that far, but there certainly is a stigma attached to it; it's a very serious social transgression to drink and drive.

At one point, though, drinking and driving was socially acceptable. It's hard to believe now, but it was. It was something that was commonplace. There were a lot of tragic consequences to that. So how did we get to the point in our society where we don't accept that anymore? Well, we educated people. We educated people, through organizations like MADD, through our police services like the OPP and local services, about the tragic personal consequences of impaired driving. The other thing we did was that we took impaired driving and made the penalties commensurate with the risk to public safety. We said to ourselves, "This is no longer acceptable. We have to apply penalties that are commensurate with the risk." Even in this bill, actually, we take some further measures.

I believe that we need to take the same approach with distracted driving. I know that in my city of Ottawa there's a public education campaign, "Leave the Phone Alone"—no texting. It's been effective. They've done a fair amount of enforcement.

In this bill, we have increased penalties by increasing the fines to a range of \$300 to \$1,000, by adding three demerit points for distracted driving through legislation, and applying that to the novice licence in the graduated licensing system.

I would like to mention as well that the member from Scarborough—Rouge River put forward a bill, the Manor-

anjana Kanagasabapathy Act, which was a bill that came out of a very tragic incident that occurred in his riding. I'd like to thank him very much for putting that forward. It's included in this bill, and I really believe it's a very important part of this bill.

We were talking about these things yesterday. It's not just BlackBerry and Apples and any kind of device that you can text on. It is, as the member opposite—

Interjections.

Mr. John Fraser: There's distracted debating that we have right now. Thank you very much. I appreciate your input, as always.

It is different things: People eating, combing their hair, putting their makeup on. What is interesting about these things is that often you'll see people on them everywhere—when they're having lunch with each other, when they're in meetings, sometimes when they're in debate. But it has very tragic consequences. So we have to underline the social consequences of not paying attention to the road.

Again, I'm in favour of this bill. I think there are a number of good measures here. There are lots of great things to debate. But I would like to add my voice to those who have already spoken in the Legislature, to say that the measures here for distracted driving are important and we should move forward with them. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Unfortunately, I missed the beginning of what the member from Ottawa South was saying, because I had to wait—I stay at my sister's house when I have to be here early in the morning, because she's downtown and the commute from Thornhill is too long. I would appeal to everybody to think about what we're doing to our own colleagues and friends and neighbours with this worsening traffic gridlock all the time. It took us three or four lights to get through at Harbord, to get to Wellesley and Queen's Park.

There was a lineup of cars in the bike lane, and I noticed in the cab—Ali from Beck Taxi was the cab driver—that he had “Stop and look for bikes” stickers on his windows, so that people should look before they open the doors, which is part of what we're talking about with this bill: to be a little more careful, when you open your door, not to hurt any cyclists. There's a lot that we could be doing downtown in the GTA and Hamilton to make the roads safer for cyclists, to make the roads safer for pedestrians and to make traffic move so that business and the economy can get booming again. I think that we should focus on the things that we can do easily.

0910

I think distracted driving—obviously there have to be fines and we have to be concerned, but I think it's more of a public awareness campaign. It's more of an understanding of people's behaviour. The society that we live in now is so much technology, so much going on up to the minute, so many people, their lives and their jobs—they can't function. Maybe we have to have a public

awareness campaign for employers who would consider not promoting somebody or, worse, would consider firing somebody if they couldn't get them to respond immediately, to answer an e-mail or a text message immediately.

People aren't always doing it just to play games or to set up a date or a social event. They are often under incredible pressure from their jobs. I think all of us here are aware of that, where we've gone somewhere and there's been an important message—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I first of all want to say that I represent a part of the province where you probably can't text and you probably don't have a road. Many places where I come from unfortunately are landlocked communities where there isn't that type of technology. I say that not to make fun of it, but just to get people to recognize that, depending on where you live in this province, the issues are very different.

There, it would be nice just to have cell service. For example, in the towns of Moosonee and Moose Factory you can't get your cellphone to work because the network that they've got there is not compatible with anybody else, like Bell or Rogers or whoever. So to be able to have a cellphone and live in Moosonee or Moose Factory is a challenge.

Places like Attawapiskat, interestingly enough—and I give the government some credit; they've actually helped with some NOHFC funding in order to put a cell tower up in Attawapiskat. And we have a cell service in Attawapiskat, but guess what? It doesn't work with anybody else's cellphone, except if you happen to be connected to the cell service that runs out of Thunder Bay. So I just say, there's a very different reality for people in this province, depending on where they live.

The general intent of making sure that people do the responsible thing behind the wheel—the minister talked about the car as a weapon. He's perfectly right. There's far too much distracted driving. Everything from eating cheeseburgers to doing your hair to texting on the phone while driving is, quite frankly, taking a pretty irresponsible approach to what driving is.

I'll pick up on the point that was just made, that a lot of this stuff is, I would say, common sense, and a large part of it should be actually done through public awareness and advertising on the part of the government. I'm not so sure that, at the end of the day, we're going to have the kind of effect we want coming out of this legislation. I think it's good that we talk about it and that we try to find some way to address the issue, but I think the larger thing we've got to do is to break the culture. Once you've broken the culture I think you're probably going to be further ahead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you to my colleagues from Ottawa South, from Thornhill and from Timmins—James Bay for speaking in support of Bill 31.

As we know here on this side, for the last 13 years Ontario consistently remains ranked as either first or sec-

ond for road safety in North America. But people are still being killed on our roads. That's precisely why we need to do more. Bill 31 I think goes a long way in addressing a lot of the issues that we have here.

It's interesting that I hear support on all sides of the House, because all of us have either been involved in or have family that have been involved in a cycling or car or pedestrian accident. So I really am thrilled to hear some of these things coming forward.

Keeping our roads safe is the highest priority on the government side here, and I think that many have talked about distracted driving, which is kind of a new phenomenon. You know, 20 years ago we didn't have cellphones, we didn't have the types of electronic devices that take our eyes off the road. In today's society we have to get that message.

Certainly, our young folks are. I have two boys right now who are doing their driving courses, and they're being taught each and every time they're in the car that their cellphones are firmly either in the trunk or out of sight. I think that that goes a long way to providing support for our own distracted-driving clause.

According to recent statistics, over 45 per cent of drivers killed in Ontario are found to have drugs in their system, and I do believe that I've heard support across the House regarding our drug-impaired driving laws that we're looking at bringing forward in this bill.

Thanks very much, everybody, for the support on this bill. I look forward to further debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise to make comments on the act to amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Highway 407 East Act, which affects a lot of pieces of legislation, and about distracted driving and making our roads safer.

The member from Ottawa South had his remaining few minutes, which I listened to diligently, about concerns. This is about making safety better for motorists. I see the Highway 407 East Act—I certainly just want to put a plug in there: The 407 east to Highways 35 and 115 can't come soon enough. The government changed the dates a few times on that, kind of disappointing many of my residents, but we're supposed to have it there by 2020. We welcome that to open up the area of Kawartha Lakes and Haliburton. It's a big impact on our area, and we have many businesses waiting for that to happen.

Highway 35—of course, we've asked for four-laning. It's been in process and everything is kind of at the table. Again, it's kind of political will, so we encourage that to be done as soon as possible.

There were lots of comments on distracted driving, which will certainly have penalties. We've all seen the commercials. I think there are more commercials now about ways to try to encourage people to stop—very vivid commercials.

I also want to mention something in my office: the MTO's suspending licences. Sometimes licences are suspended by the MTO for medical reasons. The problem is

that some of them aren't accurate. The frustration we have a lot in my constituency office, for sure, is that the person may not even know their licence has been suspended because the mail doesn't get there for, like, 10 days. The other part is that it's 30- to 50-some days before it's actually reviewed, and that is just too long for a person to not be able to go to work and to need rides to medical appointments. I think that really needs to be looked at.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I return to the member for Ottawa South. You have two minutes.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the members from Thornhill, Timmins-James Bay, Cambridge and Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

I'd like to respond to the member from Thornhill that I do agree that the measures in this bill with regard to cycling are very important as well: the issue of public awareness and making sure that people know it's not just about the penalties; it's about social change. I thank her very much for her remarks.

To the member from Timmins-James Bay, I appreciate very much his comments on things that are important to his community and that he raised those in the debate. Again, I agree with the need to have public awareness campaigns. Penalties are just not enough. It's too late by the time there's a penalty. I'm encouraged by this bill. I think we can make some progress in terms of ending or reducing distracted driving. I thank him very much for his comments.

To the member from Cambridge, I very much appreciated your comments on distracted driving, and I fully agree with the penalties being extended to drug-related offences, driving while you're drug-impaired—the measures in the bill. That's very important as well. I'm sure that all the members in the Legislature agree with extending those prohibitions.

To the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, thank you very much for your comments on behalf of your community and what's important to you there. I do agree that the medical suspensions from MTO are things that many of our constituency offices deal with. There are some measures in this bill to improve that and make it a more transparent process. I'm encouraged by that as well, and I thank you very much for your remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank everyone for their comments.

Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased and privileged to have the honour to speak in this House this morning in response to the government's Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act.

0920

Bill 31 was introduced in this House last fall, on October 21, and now we're engaged, of course, in second reading. There has been considerable second reading debate so far, and as a result, those of us who are speaking

have about 10 minutes to speak to this bill. So there isn't a great deal of opportunity.

I think that the people from my riding of Wellington—Haltoun Hills, whom I'm privileged to serve—and I want to express my appreciation again for the trust that they've given me over recent years to serve in this place—would wonder, perhaps, about the priorities of the debate today. Reading the newspaper and following question period, there are no fewer than three OPP investigations under way, investigating the activities of the government with respect to Ornge air ambulance, the cancellation of the gas plants and the resulting deletion of emails, and of course, more recently, what went on leading up to the Sudbury by-election, all of which are pretty significant issues. We'll be discussing those, I'm sure, during question period, in a short time.

At the same time, I think it's important to remind members of the fiscal context in which this debate occurs today. I take my numbers from the fall economic statement that the government released before Christmas, the Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review. We see that the government is currently projecting a \$12.5-billion deficit in the current fiscal year, which ends March 31 of this year. The government claims to be working toward a balanced budget by 2017-18, and at the same time the deficit went up year over year from \$10.5 billion last year to \$12.5 billion this year. We see that the projected provincial net debt is going to be \$287.3 billion this year—not as high as Greece, but getting there. We see that the net debt in 2003 was \$139 billion, so over a period of about 11 years, it has doubled.

We see that provincial government spending this year is projected to be \$130.2 billion, which is up from \$126.4 billion last year. Again, this is a government that purports to be working towards a balanced budget, moving to a balanced budget, and yet spending went up by almost \$4 billion last year. We see that the net debt per capita, meaning the amount of money that each Ontario resident—man, woman and child—would owe, if indeed we were ever to try to pay down the debt, is \$21,003, up from \$11,339 in 2003—again, virtually a doubling of the net debt per capita since this government took office.

Then, of course, the projected interest payment on the debt this year being \$10.8 billion—I see the member has a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker: I appreciate the member's narrative. He's a very experienced parliamentarian. Although I cannot quarrel with what he's saying, I do have to ask the Speaker, what does this has to do with the bill that's under discussion?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member if he would tie it into the bill as quickly as he can.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Bill 31 is an important bill that the government has brought forward in the Legislature. We're debating it today. I'm simply outlining the fiscal context in which we debate this legislation today. I'm

glad that the member didn't dispute the numbers. Of course, the numbers are factually correct, and they are in the fall economic statement. These are certainly the government's own numbers. Again, I think that it's important to point out the fiscal context in which we come into this House today and discuss these issues.

I'll just conclude, in deference to the member: Interest payments on the debt this year are projected to be \$10.8 billion. The interest on the debt is the fastest-growing item in the provincial budget; by 2017-18, it's expected to be \$13.9 billion. Of course, money that we pay to our lenders on the debt, in terms of interest, is money that can't go to front-line services like improving highway safety.

I'll come back now to the bill. Bill 31, of course, is an important piece of legislation that the government has introduced. We know that, in summary, the bill removes the requirement that the registrar of motor vehicles give a person who has failed to pay a toll, and subsequent fees and interest, a second notice. At the next opportunity, a vehicle permit won't be validated or issued to that person, so they're not requiring a second notification, if this bill is passed.

This bill will remove the requirement that the Minister of Transportation conduct an annual review, including public consultation, on the amount of the toll the following year with respect to the 407.

Again, we recall that back in the heady days of the new Liberal government in 2003, when they were first elected, they'd been elected, I believe, on a platform and commitment to reduce the tolls on the 407, even though I think they knew it was impossible to do that. There was a legal challenge and a court case, and in the end it was found that the government didn't have the power to reduce the tolls and couldn't do it. So, of course, they brought in this requirement for an annual review and public consultation on the tolls, and apparently they've decided that that is no longer necessary.

There are provisions in this bill with respect to distracted driving. I think we would all agree, Mr. Speaker, that more needs to be done to discourage distracted driving in the province of Ontario. With this bill, the penalties for using hand-held devices—in other words, cellphones, BlackBerrys, iPhones, whatever—while driving a car, driving a vehicle, behind the wheel, would be raised to between \$300 and \$1,000, from the current fine range of \$60 to \$500, a fairly substantial increase in the fines for using hand-held devices while driving.

Again, I would give credit to and acknowledge the former member for Durham, John O'Toole, who for so many years pushed an amendment to the Highway Traffic Act, I believe, to basically make it illegal to use a cellphone while driving. When he started that quest, I think there were a lot of people who thought it was going to be impossible to enforce, and people had questions about the privacy issues. But at the same time, he maintained and continued to raise that issue in the House for a number of years, and was ultimately successful, showing an example, I think, of how private members can in fact make

a difference in this place and influence public policy and the ultimate decisions of government. It sometimes takes time and you have to be patient and persistent, but certainly he demonstrated those qualities, and, in the end, the government agreed.

I think it's also important to point out that Bill 31 includes—there are numerous indications from the government that the bill will also usher in demerit points, but there's really no mention of demerit points in the proposed legislation. Rather, the government and the minister can bring in regulations, I gather, to deal with that issue over time. Of course, from an opposition perspective, we'd like to see the details. I think it's reasonable to ask questions around what they're planning to do with respect to regulation. If it was set in legislation, it would be, obviously, more clear and better understood by all of us, and it would probably be in the public interest to ensure that those details are forthcoming soon.

With respect to impaired driving, again, I think there's a consensus in the House amongst all three political parties—I can't speak for all parties, but I gather and expect that most members here would agree that we need to continue to take steps to discourage the consumption of alcohol before driving a vehicle. Impaired driving is a serious problem and continues to be a serious problem. Although we've made, I think, great strides towards reducing it, there are still too many instances in our province where people are getting behind the wheel after they've had too much to drink. Obviously, in an impaired condition, the chances of having an accident and hurting themselves and hurting other people on the road go up exponentially. More has to be done in that regard too.

This bill attempts to increase the effectiveness of MTO's conduct behaviour programs, including the ignition interlock program. As we know, ignition interlock systems can be installed in vehicles, ensuring that if a person has had too much to drink—or even, basically, anything to drink, I believe—if they turn their key, the vehicle won't start. It's a mechanism for ensuring that people who have consumed alcohol and perhaps have been convicted of impaired driving in the past are not going to be able to start their cars, and that's a good thing, I think. Again, I think that's something that has arisen from the debate in this Legislature. It seems to me that the member for Simcoe North was pushing that for a number of years as well.

I haven't had a chance to go into all the details of what I'd hoped to talk about, because we have only 10 minutes. I have a number of other things that I'll try to address in my concluding remarks, Mr. Speaker, after the questions and comments. But this is an important piece of legislation that the government has introduced. It deals with a lot of issues with respect to improving highway safety and improving safety for bicyclers. I think it's important that we debate these issues in detail and ensure that the bill goes to a standing committee of the Legislature for further discussion, allowing public input amongst people who have an interest in these issues and who are experts, quite frankly, more so than perhaps some of us

as members, and to hear from the general public as to what needs to be done to improve and strengthen this bill.

I certainly look forward to the continued debate on Bill 31.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's a pleasure to rise today and to speak to Bill 31, the Transportation Statute Law Amendment Act (Making Ontario's Roads Safer)—and who could argue with that? Of course, our communities are always aware and involved and wanting legislators to take a look at road safety, as it is our most important mechanism for people to get around.

0930

I think what I'd like to do is provide a little bit of background around what we experience in Essex county—mainly a lack of good maintenance and upkeep of roads, tied to budgetary constraints that the provincial government has put on us. There are similar experiences in northern communities, where we see, particularly in winter, that roads are unsafe simply because they're not allocating the proper amount of funding to be able to maintain the current roads that are there. So I think they're putting the cart before the horse in terms of prioritizing this bill.

Needless to say, it is important. It's certainly a matter of health and safety and protection for drivers and of course cyclists, those who use our roads. Some of the provisions are very reasonable when it comes to distracted and drugged driving. We certainly look forward to hearing more about them and actually getting more community input from stakeholders.

One thing that I would say is there is a difference in terms of driving in urban areas like Toronto and driving in my community of Essex. We tend to not actually be as aware—I can tell you my wife is fearful of driving in Toronto because there's so much happening. So there has to be some realization that driving in Ontario is different in different parts, and those types of considerations have to be made. A one-size-fits-all approach to mandating provisions or regulations might not fit. Let's take that into consideration, especially when it comes to speed limits for municipalities and what the pressures might be on them to conform to any type of standards here within the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the member from Wellington-Halton Hills and the member from Essex for their comments on this very important bill.

Two components are very important to me. Number one, which I'll speak briefly about, is the ability to allow municipalities or give the tools to municipalities to collect provincial offences fines. I was formerly a mayor for 11 years, sat on the united counties of Stormont, Dundas and South Glengarry county council, and we always, always had issues with collecting provincial offences. So to give municipalities extra tools—I think they'll be very much appreciative of that.

The second component is later on in the actual bill itself, and it's some changes to the tire pressures on

ATVs. If the members would recall, I introduced a motion which was unanimously supported in the House here to allow two-ups and side-by-sides the same privileges four-by-fours currently enjoy across the province, to go on various roads approved by municipalities, and of course approved by the province as well.

I'm looking forward to this particular piece of legislation, continuing the debate. I know that there are stakeholders right across the province—not only ATV owners—looking for these changes so that they can carry their passenger on the back; side-by-sides are very safe now, so to allow them the privilege as well. Also, it will help the farming communities; not only that, but the tourism component as well. Because I hear that in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, which borders right on the great province of Quebec, where I was born, two-ups and side-by-sides are allowed on Quebec roads. What happens is tourists can't come into Ontario; they have to stop or go elsewhere. So we're losing a lot of economic development by not having the privilege of being able to come to Ontario and enjoy all the great things that Ontario does have to offer.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm happy to chime in. It was a pleasure listening to my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills remark this morning. The first portion or first half of his remarks obviously brought the importance of our fiscal situation to the Legislature this morning, and to the folks watching at home.

I know we also mentioned a pioneer of this bill, John O'Toole, a former member for Durham. I imagine he's watching this morning, as he usually does, so I want to welcome him this morning to the Legislature and hope that he's enjoying his retirement and so forth.

Just picking up on the comments from the previous member—you know what? I know we're going to be debating for a second time today a bill or a motion on allowing side-by-sides, UTVs etc. on Ontario highways.

I would encourage that member to speak to his transportation minister and encourage him to move forward with that. It is a simple regulation change that could happen with the stroke of a pen, so get off the pot, per se, and get it done, really. We'll be supporting, obviously, that bill or motion this afternoon. I know my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka will also be discussing this important issue in the days coming.

I want to just spend, I guess, 35 seconds on an area of the bill where we do have concerns. Obviously, distracted driving is now the leading cause of death on Ontario highways.

But we've got an issue with this vehicle inspection centre system—very vague details in terms of what this is about. We hear complaints daily about the Drive Clean program; it's just a useless bureaucracy that inconveniences drivers. I'm concerned that here is another system that will grow and grow, and is simply another tax on drivers—so big concerns with that. With that, I'll sit down and listen to the rest of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: One of the areas I want to touch on is the outsourcing of the new vehicle inspection centre system and, in fact, the existing outsourcing of driver licensing. This system has been shown to be flawed in a number of ways. Many people have spoken out about this. We've seen numerous issues about this. In fact, this is a trend with this government, and it's a serious problem.

When you outsource, one of the major problems that happens is, there is a lack of accountability. We see that with Serco, and we are afraid that we'll see that in the future with the new vehicle inspection centre system.

We're also currently seeing that with Taron. Taron is another example. This is an example of, let's know our history so we're not doomed to repeat it. Taron currently, as it exists, is an arm's-length provider of warranty. It's the only provider of warranty for new homes in Ontario. The system is so flawed; it is flawed from top to bottom. It is biased in favour of builders and developers. It actively denies claims on every occasion it can. In fact, it fights claims in court to make sure that people don't get the coverage that they're entitled to. People are up in arms. They're upset across this province, and this government is doing nothing about this. In fact, the way that it has been set up, the government can't even have proper oversight over it unless we change legislation.

We're asking the government to not make that same mistake now. We know that it doesn't work. We've seen what goes on with Taron. Let's not do that with Serco and with this new vehicle inspection centre system. My concern is that without proper oversight, without proper accountability, we are going to see a system that does not serve the people of Ontario and, in fact, will be something that works against the people of Ontario. Again, when it comes to Taron, we're seeing that right now first-hand. We should learn from our history. We should learn from the problems of Taron and the fact that it's not serving the people, and not engage in something that's going to continue that same mistaken path.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Wellington–Halton Hills. You have two minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to thank the members who responded to my brief comments this morning on Bill 31.

When we talk about highway safety, I think there has to be an emphasis on improving highway infrastructure as well. As you know, for a number of years now I've been calling upon the provincial government to place the Highway 6 Morriston bypass project on the ministry's five-year plan for new construction, the southern highways program. I've had numerous discussions with members, and before Christmas I had a fairly long conversation with the Minister of Transportation on the last day of the House. He certainly led me to believe that he was doing everything he could. I have not yet heard back from him, but I am hopeful. I took him at his word that, indeed, he is doing everything he can to try and get that

project on the five-year plan of the ministry. We have broad support from the community, the township of Puslinch council, the county of Wellington and a very large industry association that has come together to advocate. So we're hopeful, and we look to the minister to provide the necessary leadership.

I would also point out—and we know the Good Roads/ROMA convention is coming up next weekend—the concern that many municipalities have with the cancellation of the Connecting Link Program. I'm sure my friend for Northumberland—Quinte West knows about that. There have been a number of municipalities through the last couple of years that have brought and continue to bring this to the attention of the government. The infrastructure programs that have been brought in by the government are not an adequate replacement for the Connecting Link Program.

0940

We have issues in Centre Wellington: a bridge that needs to be built through town—they call it the St. David Street bridge—which is estimated to cost \$2.6 million. The town of Halton Hills had a five-year capital program, including \$9.3 million in needed projects along the connecting link roadways. Basically, they were left high and dry when this project was cancelled.

I would also draw attention to the need for a traffic light in Rockwood in front of the new school, the École Harris Mill school. In the township of Guelph/Eramosa, Mayor Chris White and I are working together on that. We're going to continue to urge the minister to make sure that there's safety on Highway 7 in front of that new school so that the kids can cross the road safely. I will continue to raise that issue as well in the coming weeks and months until it's resolved.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm really happy to have this opportunity to talk about Bill 31, Making Ontario's Roads Safer. As you know, I represent a mainly rural riding, one of those big northern ridings. I represent 33 little communities. I want to talk about how to make our roads safer. I will read from my constituents who have written and who want to share their ideas about making our roads in northern, rural Ontario safer. I'll start with Lynn Castonguay:

"I am e-mailing you today to inform you that I travel Hwy 144 from Onaping to Chelmsford on a daily basis and this roadway has become a hazard in several areas. The area between Dowling and Onaping (mainly before the A.Y. Jackson Lookout)"—this is a beautiful park on the side of a river—"is an area that needs immediate attention before someone gets seriously hurt.

"The section has become overcome with potholes that have merged into large ruts in the road: They are deep and when hit have a tendency to send your vehicle out of control. I witnessed it last night with two vehicles in front of me and for me as well. The only way to avoid these is to take the shoulder of the road which is not cleaned" of snow or ice, "or take the middle of the hwy.

"Since this roadway is the only main road to Levack/Onaping"—it takes you to all the way to Timmins if you continue going north—"I think it would be wise for it to be better maintained.

"These should be looked at and filled on a regular basis and the issue was a problem last year and it appears it is going on again this year.

"Thought I should file a complaint in order for this matter to be addressed."

I have this other letter from Mr. G.W. He lives in Onaping Falls, also in my riding.

"Dear Madame Gélinas,

"I've written you on several occasions in the past and I'm here one more time to express my fear and trepidation when driving Hwy 144 between Dowling and the Onaping/Levack turnoff.

"You have been very gracious in replying to my last email and that is much appreciated and I really do understand that these kinds of improvements take time, but that section of Hwy 144 is abominable ... it is getting worse by the day.

"I wish you or one of your able employees would drive that stretch of highway at any time of the day"—by the way, I did go out and drive that stretch of highway, and he's absolutely right—"especially at shift change at the mines or whenever the heavy trucks are using it (which is always)."

Just so that you know, there are three mines in that area of Onaping/Levack, as well as many, many aggregate pits, so there are big trucks. I don't know if you've ever seen the big tandem trucks when they're coming at you—you don't want to be in front of them.

"By the end of the winter, sections of that road will be impassable unless you have a large truck or a tank! These are not the ramblings of a discontented citizen ... I love my province and hold my legislators in very high esteem, but something has to be done before there is a catastrophic accident in that stretch of road. Again, thanks for your time and concern."

That was from G.W. in Onaping, Ontario.

I will continue. This time it's Chris LaBerge, who writes:

"Hello. This letter is regarding the conditions of our highways. I drive from Cartier to Chelmsford for work to support my family. The potholes are so bad there has been damage incurred to my vehicle. You cannot drive in the proper lanes because of these and it is highly unsafe.

"Also there is a lot of wildlife, as well as logging and ore trucks up this way and it is extremely hard to watch out for them when you are dodging potholes in which some are six inches deep...."

He comes up with five concerns:

"(1) Who is going to pay for the repairs to my vehicle?

"(2) When is this stretch of highway going to be re-surfaced?

"(3) What will it take for any actions to be done?

"(4) Where are we supposed to drive? (In our own lanes and absolutely destroy our vehicles, or in the middle of the highway and hope for the best.)

“(5) How does our infrastructure become so unsafe and deplorable without anything being done?”

“We the taxpayers/drivers pay for this through our taxes, and are extremely frustrated to have to pay for it again in nonsense repairs” to our vehicle.

“Thank you for your time.”

I will keep going and read an email that I got from James Neville. He called to complain on January 6 of this year. Mr. Neville and his family live in Levack and complain that the road is full of holes, and it is so bad that he blew out one of his studded tires. Those are not cheap, Speaker.

“Why are we being held hostage because of MTO negligence?” he asked. He has no choice but to use this road to travel to work. He is worried that his family members will get killed, travelling this stretch of highway. The contractors are using a hand tamper to patch the holes. Of course, they are not sticking and are flying off into windshields.

I received a call from—she didn’t want me to use her name, but her initials are E.B. She says that Highway 144 is terrible: “I can’t avoid the holes, and the patching is a hazard because it doesn’t stick to the road and flies off into our windshields. Why don’t they fix it properly the first time? It would save a lot of money. The road was like this last winter. They had all summer to fix it. These contractors are not doing a good job.”

I’ll go on with Mrs. G.T., her initials:

“Hi France:

“It is with regret that I find I am writing to you once again about the deterioration of this stretch of highway.” She’s talking about Highway 144 between Chelmsford and Onaping.

“Over the past month, I have watched numerous stretches of potholes becoming a continuing stretch of potholes on each side of the highway and deeper by the day.

“It seems worse than last year at this time.

“This morning a truck careened over the guardrails into a deep rock-engulfed ravine, the exact spot a car went over one month ago; around a rock cut”—second accident: exact same place, because of the potholes.

“I pray each night as I return home that I will make it home safely as I cannot tell where every hole is in the dark and the only place to avoid them seems to be driving as close as you can to the centre line.

“It’s nerve-racking when you know you are passing 30 to 50 hauling and dump trucks each way.” Those are the trucks that service the mines and the logging as well as the aggregates.

“I pray each night as I return home that I will not get into an accident and will make it home, due to the terrible condition of this highway.

“Also, is there a fund I can put a claim in for replacing a tire and front-end spring which broke due to hitting pothole after pothole? My mechanic said these springs are half an inch in diameter and it takes a lot to break them. Within 10 minutes the broken spring punctured two

tires. Luckily this happened in my driveway and not on the highway.

“I look forward to hearing from you once again.

“Last year after I emailed you, within four to five days, at minus 36 degrees Celsius, they were fixing the potholes at night. I had to laugh.”

Ron Leclair also wrote to me. Ron lives in Onaping. “The hot patches aren’t working either—cars ripping out the asphalt and flying at windshields of the car behind them. I’ve had to replace windshields twice.”

0950

I shared some of those stories with you this morning, Speaker, and believe me, I have way more. While this Legislature is talking about making roads safer, we know that we have a safety issue in my riding. We know that we have a stretch of road that is so dangerous that we can tell where the next accident will happen. But when you add to this 30-, 50- or 60-ton trucks coming at you non-stop—24 hours a day, seven days a week, those big trucks are on the road. You’re trying to make your way home, because it is our only road. We deserve safety on our roads, too.

I agree that distracted driving is dangerous, but I also agree that people in northern Ontario need roads that are safe. Right now, I hope you will share with the constituents that have taken the time to write that we need to do better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Yvan Baker: I’m proud to speak to this issue today. I think this is a really important issue. I know that a lot of us, if not all of us, have been impacted by road safety, the importance of making sure that, as we travel our roads, we know that the people of Ontario are safe and can get from work and can get to play in a quick but also safe manner. That has to be paramount.

We also have to make sure that our roads are moving. This is important to support not only our quality of life but also our economy. I know that is something that’s so important to all of us, and I know it’s critically important to our Minister of Transportation, Minister Del Duca. I know he’s working very hard on these issues.

There are a number of things that the government is doing to address these things. I know the member opposite talked about roads in rural areas. You’re absolutely right that the issues that touch us in terms of safety and in terms of making sure that our roads are moving apply to all parts of Ontario. I have to emphasize that for the past 13 years we’ve been ranked either number one or number two in terms of road safety.

Hon. Michael Chan: Wow. That’s a good record.

Mr. Yvan Baker: That’s a record to be proud of. But we’re not resting on our laurels. Minister Del Duca is not resting on his laurels. There’s more work to be done. On average, one person is killed on our roads every 18 hours, and one person is injured every eight and a half minutes. We really need to keep working on road safety.

One of the things that I wanted to speak to was just a couple of the items that I know are in Bill 31 that I think

are important. I can't possibly cover it all, because there are a number of elements to this bill that are important. But, first of all, something that I think is really important is increased penalties for distracted driving. We see it every day: people who are distracted behind the wheel. Increased penalties, I think, are an incredibly important element to this, not only in terms of the fines but also the demerit points that people will face.

There are measures in this bill about impaired driving. There are measures here about bus and vehicle safety. There are measures about pedestrian safety and about helping municipalities in order to collect defaulted provincial offences fines. All of these measures are critical to making sure our roads are safe, making sure they move quickly, making sure we enjoy the quality of life, but have the safety that all Ontarians would like and deserve.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I listened very intently to the member from Nickel Belt. We all know that we're here to serve our constituents, and I really appreciated hearing the letters from her constituents.

What I hear often—I get more emails than phone calls, which I guess is a sign of the times, and what I hear often from emails is that people want to be able to get where they need to go, and they want to get there safely. What they are very concerned about in Thornhill is their children's safety. People would like to have their kids ride their bikes to go a mile or two miles. It's not that far. We all did it when we were kids. They just feel that the roads aren't safe for them.

What this bill is really supposed to be about, I would hope, is to make our roads safer. What seems to be coming out is a lot more red tape and a lot of costs to the drivers.

What we need to focus on is how we can make the roads safer. It's not always fun to do the maintenance work. People tend to want to put money into new projects on which they can have big fancy announcements, but the reality is that cars are being damaged by potholes and by unsafe road conditions, by speed bumps when the roads weren't cleared of snow and people didn't see the speed bumps. As the member from Nickel Belt mentioned, the springs on cars, the suspension, get damaged by all these things, and we're actually making the cars unsafe if we're not keeping our roads well maintained and well cleared of snow.

I would ask the Speaker for permission to show a picture. I know we're not allowed to show props, but it shows the very beautiful, creative bike lanes next to very safe pedestrian conditions in Japan. It's very clearly marked by a different type of paving colours and signage, and it just looks so beautiful that even if you actually have nowhere to go, you want to go for a walk or get on your bike and use those bike lanes. So I think that's what we should be working on: creative ways to get people to use our roads safely.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M. Gilles Bisson: Monsieur, la 144, ça doit être le pire bout de chemin qu'on a vu dans cette province depuis longtemps. Quand tu arrives dans le bout du Halfway Lake Provincial Park en descendant—moi, je le sais parce que j'ai eu l'occasion de visiter Sudbury une couple de fois cet hiver, une belle place pour aller faire les vacances au milieu de l'hiver. C'était vraiment horrible. La condition de la route est telle que tu as besoin de vraiment ralentir. Si tu essaies de conduire juste à 80 kilomètres à l'heure, tu prends vraiment la chance d'avoir un accident parce que l'asphalte est si décollé du «top» du chemin. C'est franchement déplorable jusqu'à quel point ce chemin-là n'est pas bon.

Je sais que la députée M^{me} Gélinas a soulevé la question avec le ministre, puis avec le ministère. Espérons que ça va être réparé cet été, parce qu'on sait que M^{me} Gélinas est toujours bien capable d'avancer ses dossiers. Mais je pense que ça parle d'un fléau—c'est un beau mot, ça, fléau—qui est beaucoup plus prononcé ces jours-ci, puis ça, c'est les investissements qu'on fait et qu'on ne fait pas, des fois, quand ça vient à nos chemins.

Je sais que la première ministre, qui a quasiment beaucoup de bon sens, veut investir dans l'infrastructure des transports en commun ici au sud de la province de l'Ontario, à Toronto, à Hamilton et autres. Nous, les néo-démocrates, on dit : «Écoute, ça fait beaucoup de bon sens. On n'a pas de problème. Mais n'oubliez pas qu'il y a une autre partie de la province qui est le Nord. On a plus de routes au Nord, en géographie, que vous autres avez au sud de la province, et on a besoin de mieux entretenir ces routes.»

Le chemin est assez grave qu'on pourrait commencer un jardin pour être capable de planter des concombres au milieu de la 144. La terre est assez défrichée que tu pourrais—the challenge of the day, right? Tu aurais pu commencer un jardin sur la ligne jaune de la 144 et planter des concombres, parce que je pense qu'il y a une chance qu'ils pourraient pousser à travers de cet asphalte.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Good morning, Speaker. Thank you for this opportunity. Thanks to all the colleagues who have pointed out how important this bill is.

I was driving down from Barrie one day. The gridlock was pretty bad, but we were moving about 40 kilometres an hour. I looked at the car beside me and there was a young woman frantically texting away on her phone. And then I realized that in the back seat was a beautiful little baby, in the seat behind her. I felt so badly because just as she was texting, somebody cut in in front of her, and I don't know how there was not an accident. I felt so badly for that little girl. I think we need to deter people from doing that. One of the best ways to do that is to hit people in the pocketbook, unfortunately.

Also, one of the very important parts of this bill: As SCFEA travelled the province, many of the mayors of the municipalities and also Mayor Lehman in Barrie have let me know that there are millions of dollars of unpaid Provincial Offences Act fines. I believe that this bill will

help municipalities to collect those fines. I pay \$6,600 a year in municipal taxes for a subdivision home. Our municipality desperately needs that money that is owed to them, and I hope that everyone understands that this is a very important part of this bill as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank everyone for their comments. I return to the member for Nickel Belt. You have two minutes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke Centre, the member for Thornhill, my colleague from Timmins–James Bay and the member from Barrie for their comments.

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What I tried to do this morning was to give you a bit of a glimpse into what it means to live in northern Ontario, what it means to live in Nickel Belt. The roads are really bad. I did reach out to the ministry and the Minister of Transportation, and they have given me a schedule to fix the road. They've actually gone out of contract. There is a contractor from down south who is presently in Nickel Belt trying to patch the road, but at minus 42 this morning in Nickel Belt with the wind chill, and minus 36 the day before and minus 38 the day before that, it's not always obvious to be able to do this in the middle of winter—not to mention that there's snow everywhere. A stretch of it will be repaved next summer, but it won't be until the following summer when the next stretch of it is done.

For the people who use it every day, those timelines are too long. Too many people feel that their life is in danger with this timetable. We certainly appreciate that they're trying to fix it right now, and they have answered my plea to do something, but this schedule of some of it next summer and some of it not until the summer of 2016 is hard for the people who travel that road every day to accept.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It might be part of their agricultural policy—more farmland.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes; if there is a cucumber plant growing in the middle of the highway, Gilles, I will let you know.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm thrilled and honoured to rise in the House today to speak to a critically important piece of legislation for our province: the Making Ontario's Roads Safer Act, Bill 31. In doing so, I join my colleagues opposite from Nickel Belt, Kitchener–Conestoga, Etobicoke Centre, Thornhill, Timmins–James Bay and Barrie. Thank you, colleagues, for participating in this important conversation.

As has already been noted, Ontario enjoys the safest roads in North America. An important piece of the framework is because we have the kinds of laws that really make Ontarians feel safe, and in reality they are safe. But it's worth spending a few minutes, I think, talking about the importance of Bill 31 and what it's destined to do.

It is part of a broader package of legislative and subsequent supported regulatory amendments to the Highway

Traffic Act destined to improve road safety, enhance the collection of defaulted Provincial Offences Act fines, improve the Highway 407 East Act and address a number of housekeeping items that are important in the ongoing maintenance and safety of our roads.

The intended outcomes of these proposed changes in this broad-ranging bill include improvements related to impaired driving by drugs and alcohol, distracted driving, medically unfit drivers, truck, vehicle and bus safety, pedestrian safety, cycling safety—I'm going to talk about that in a moment, Speaker—collection of defaulted POA fines, and of course the Highway 407 East Act.

The road safety issues that the bill aims to address continue to be persistent challenges in our province, unfortunately. According to recent statistics, over 45% of drivers killed in Ontario were found to have drugs or a combination of drugs and alcohol in their system; drinking-and-driving fatalities represented nearly one quarter of all fatalities in 2011; between 2008 and 2012, an average of 14% of convicted alcohol-impaired drivers were repeat offenders—that is indeed a sad statistic—and if current collision trends continue, fatalities from distracted driving may exceed those from drinking and driving by 2016.

In 2011, pedestrians constituted approximately one in five motor-vehicle-related fatalities. In my previous life, before I was elected, as the CEO of the Share the Road Cycling Coalition, Ontario's cycling advocacy and policy organization, I was proud to be part of the Cycling Death Review, conducted by the Ontario coroner, that looked into cycling deaths between 2000 and 2012. There were 125 Ontarians who lost their lives while cycling, and that is indeed something that we should all be interested in addressing.

It's often said that it takes a village to raise a child, and this legislation is no different. I'm proud of the fact that it includes ideas from members opposite. I think Ontarians expect that from us, Speaker. They want the best of us; they want us to work together. This bill is reflective of suggestions and wonderful ideas from the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, the member from Simcoe North, the member from Nepean–Carleton and the member from Parkdale–High Park. It is also the culmination of years of hard work by officials in the Ministry of Transportation and across 12 government ministries who embraced the #CycleON strategy, which I was proud to launch in September 2013 with the member for Toronto Centre, the previous Minister of Transportation.

I spoke a moment ago about the broad-ranging aspects of the bill, and I want to focus, as I mentioned, now a little bit on the cycling safety part, Speaker. It's an issue of interest and concern to all Ontarians, including people in my riding. I know our mayor and city council and citizens in Burlington care deeply about creating the kind of bicycle-friendly community that we're now seeing across the world, as cities and countries move to become more bicycle friendly, recognizing the benefits to a more bicycle-friendly community.

What are those, Speaker? Well, they are environmental. Cycling reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Greenhouse gas emissions currently account for about 40% of all emissions, and getting those lower is in everyone's interest.

Economic opportunities: 40% of our trips in Canada are less than five kilometres. If we could encourage people to ride their bikes more often instead of taking their cars for those five-kilometre trips, how much further ahead would we be? People would be fitter. They'd be healthier. Our air would be cleaner. Our communities would be more connected.

Our children would have opportunities to ride to school. In 1971, 87% of Canadian children rode their bikes and walked to school. Now that number is about 13%. So we've done an absolute flip, and consequently, we're seeing record and rising rates of obesity in our children. The Ontario Medical Association has pointed to the fact that this may be the first generation that doesn't outlive their parents. Why aren't we finding ways to create opportunities to get our children cycling and walking to school?

When I was at Share the Road, we did a survey of four Ontario school districts, and we found the number one reason that children weren't riding their bikes to school was convenience. Their parents found it more convenient to drive them. I think we've got a lot to do to change the conversation and work to do that. Certainly this legislation will help to create those kinds of bicycle-friendly communities and give municipalities the tools they need.

Let me just highlight some of the active transportation and cycling safety initiatives that are highlighted in Bill 31. Speaker, I just want to underline the fact that when I was at Share the Road, we worked doggedly on this legislation, with members opposite I might add, which is a very nice thing to be able to say in terms of the co-operation that's engendered in this bill, and I highlighted that a moment ago.

Promoting active transportation and cyclist safety is resident in Bill 31 and is evidenced by requiring drivers of motor vehicles to maintain a minimum distance of one metre when passing cyclists on highways. This legislation, called the one-metre safe passing law, is something that we worked on very diligently with the member from Parkdale-High Park when I was at Share the Road and is now being embraced by our government. There is a jurisdiction in Canada that has this legislation already; it's Nova Scotia. There are 25 US states that currently require motorists to leave at least three feet of space when passing a cyclist, and it has led to enormous reductions in collisions and enhanced cycling safety. The number one reason, unfortunately—and I knew this when I was at Share the Road because we did a lot of polling and data collection—that 60% of Ontarians don't ride their bikes is because they're too afraid to do so. That is definitely a number that we all should aspire to reduce.

Another piece of Bill 31 that speaks to the cycling agenda is permitting cyclists to ride on the paved shoulders of all unrestricted highways. As I highlighted, the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka worked very diligently on this kind of legislation for years through private

members' bills. It's now being embraced by our government. Good for him for his solid work in this regard. That's going to not only make it cycling friendly; it's going to create opportunities for cycling tourism.

In the year 2000, the province of Quebec invested in something called the Route verte, which is a 4,300-kilometre cycling route that spans the province and nets the province of Quebec \$140 million a year in tourism revenue. Ontario has those opportunities resident within it. We have beautiful roadways. We have beautiful rural infrastructure in particular, wide-open spaces, wonderful wineries, restaurants and opportunities for Ontarians to enjoy.

I know the Waterfront Regeneration Trust is an organization that is working with tourism, cycling stakeholders, municipalities, road safety folks and the MTO right across our province in creating those kinds of tourism opportunities so that Ontario residents can get out and enjoy their bikes. But having paved shoulders to ride on is going to make an enormous difference.

It's also great for vehicles and trucks. We heard from the Ontario Trucking Association that having a paved shoulder will prevent collisions and save lives. That, in and of itself, is very important. I know, again, that the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka has worked diligently on that.

This legislation will permit contraflow bike lanes on one-way highways and roadways. This is also incredibly important. You see these all over Europe. They're incredibly important in terms of creating a cycling network in municipalities and elsewhere.

Authorizing the use of bicycle signal heads on traffic control systems: Speaker, the city of Ottawa, which is one of the most bicycle-friendly cities in the country, has cycling signals that are destined and focused on cyclists at intersections, allowing them to proceed through the intersection before the flow of traffic, saving lives and making it easier for them.

These are the kinds of measures that municipalities want and need. They're asking our government, and we're responding, Speaker, because we know how important that is.

Increasing the penalties for dooring: What is dooring, people may wonder. Unfortunately, if we, as drivers, don't look before we open our door into the oncoming lane, a cyclist may be coming. It's incredibly important. The CAA is poised to do some very important work in this area. Making sure that we're very safe and that we avoid dooring will save lives and, again, create safer roads for all of us.

There are some pieces relative to fines and increasing the fines and making sure that cyclists do their part. I know that sharing the road is everyone's responsibility. When I was at Share the Road, that's something that we certainly espoused. Cyclists are safe—they're also motorists, by the way, and they know that they have to do their part.

Thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity to speak to an issue of great passion and interest for me, the cycling

safety of our communities in our province. I'm very proud to be part of a government that has embraced Bill 31. I want to thank the members opposite for their years of work on bringing this legislation to the fore.

Again, Speaker, thank you for this opportunity.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

REPORT, CHIEF ELECTORAL OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Can I have order, please? Thank you.

I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a report from the Chief Electoral Officer with respect to the complaints pertaining to the Sudbury by-election.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Lauren Wu, who is going to be volunteering in our office now. Welcome, Lauren.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to introduce Hilary Martin, who is in the members' gallery. Hilary is the president of the Carleton University Young Liberals and was the youth chair of my most recent campaign. I want to thank Hilary for all her hard work in mobilizing a lot of young people and engaging them in politics. Welcome to Queen's Park, Hilary.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my delight to introduce Sheena Weir and Jennifer Rubel from the Ontario law society.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: To join us in the House today, we have the parents of page captain Eileen Zhang—her mother, Kathy Fan, and father, Richard Zhang—and her brother, David Zhang.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am delighted to welcome to the House this morning Naguib Gouda from Career Edge and Jasmine Irwin from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. Welcome.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to welcome representatives here today from Action Ontario: Lisa Hooper, Glen Hutzul, Jennifer Tyrrell, Dr. Brian Kirsh, Anne Coffey and Dr. Angela Mailis-Gagnon. Chronic pain is an important issue, and I appreciate their advocacy on behalf of patients. Dr. Hoskins will be speaking at their lunch reception in room 230, and I hope everybody will be there. Thank you.

Mr. Han Dong: Mr. Speaker, as can you tell from my outfit, it is the Chinese new year, or lunar new year. It's celebrated every year.

I just want to welcome the president of the Confederation of Toronto Chinese Canadian Organizations, Mr.

Cheng Yi Wei, and the secretary, Mr. Phuc Tran. Later on, they'll be hosting a reception at Queen's Park after question period in room 247. I welcome all the members to join us.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very happy to welcome students, parents and teachers from Gandatsetiagon Public School—we call it Gandy public school—in Pickering. I met with them this morning, a great group of grade 5 students here. Welcome.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We have in the east gallery my senior mining policy adviser, Drew Redden, who, more importantly, is here with his mother, Joanne, and his sister Jill. Let's welcome them. Thank you very much. That would be Joanne Redden and Jill Redden.

Mr. Yvan Baker: First of all, I'd like to welcome the students from St. Clement Catholic School in the heart of Markland Wood in my riding of Etobicoke Centre. They're here visiting today, and I think they're just filing in.

I also had the fortune this morning of meeting with some young people that I'd like to introduce. Normally folks come to my office and they raise issues that are of importance. Today I had a group of four young people come to me and speak with me, not to raise issues but to thank me and other MPPs for our public service. It's very unique and special. I'd like to thank them for engaging the young people in the political process. From MY Canada: Lia Milousis—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It's Carleton University Day at Queen's Park today and I want to welcome the fearless leader of Carleton University, President Dr. Roseann O'Reilly Runte. Along with her today we have: Suzanne Blanchard, Mark Savenkoff, Don Cumming, Peter Ricketts and Kathy McKinley. There is a reception in room 228 today at 5 p.m.

Ms. Soo Wong: I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear pins in recognition of Chinese New Year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough—Agincourt is seeking unanimous consent to wear the pins that have been provided for all members in both galleries. Do we agree? Agreed.

The Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I would like to join my colleague from Etobicoke Centre in welcoming the students from MY Canada who are here to thank us all for our public service. I think it's a wonderful group.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Ça me fait grandement plaisir aujourd'hui de vous présenter un ami très sincère, le frère Maxime Allard, qui est le président du Collège universitaire dominicain à Ottawa. Bienvenue, Maxime.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: On behalf of the member for Etobicoke North I want to welcome the parents of page captain Ishani Sharma: Ishani's mother Nishtha Sharma and father Rakesh Sharma are here at Queen's Park today. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, you mentioned this morning that the Chief Electoral Officer has tabled a report to this Legislature. Quite frankly, it's a bombshell.

I wrote the Chief Electoral Officer on December 15 regarding perceived contraventions of section 96.1 of the Election Act.

In the report from the Chief Electoral Officer: "No Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario has ever conducted a regulatory investigation into allegations of bribery or ever reported an apparent contravention of the home statutes of my office to the Attorney General."

Further in the report, it says: "Having reviewed the evidence and findings from this regulatory investigation, I am of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act as reflected in my attached report. Consequently, I have reported this matter to the Attorney General."

Premier, when are you going to do the right thing and announce today the resignation of Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed Jr.?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member opposite is well aware, this is information that has just been received. From the outset, we've been clear with Elections Ontario that they have our full co-operation. We're glad that Elections Ontario took this issue seriously and they've determined that the opposition's allegations against me and the member from Sudbury were baseless.

Patricia Sorbara will continue to offer her full co-operation as Elections Ontario's examination moves to the next phase in the process.

I understand that the complaint has been referred to the Ministry of the Attorney General for further examination by the proper authorities.

As the member opposite knows, Elections Ontario's examination is entirely independent of the government and neither the Attorney General nor her political staff have any involvement in that process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Premier: Premier, this report was tabled in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. All 107 members have a duty to uphold openness and transparency in government. You, yourself, said in your throne speech that you were going to have an open and transparent government, and you were going to do politics differently.

Premier, the report speaks for itself. There are alleged contraventions of the act. The members on this side of the House and the members in the opposition have all written to the OPP and to the Chief Electoral Officer.

When are you going to stand up in your place, do the right thing and cut these two bad apples loose?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, we have all just received this information. We have said that we will continue to work in full co-operation with Elections Ontario. The fact is that this is the next phase in Elections Ontario's process, and we will let the process unfold.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon will come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: We're members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We can decide that we're going to carry and do politics differently in this province. In the opposition, we were there. We wrote the Chief Electoral Officer. We listened to the tapes. We could hear it. Ontarians could hear it.

We're asking you a very simple question now that the report is here and we all have a copy of it. Do the right thing: Call for their resignations, and let's move forward.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, again, as I have said, we have all just received this information. I understand the political imperative of the party opposite.

We will continue to work with Elections Ontario; Patricia Sorbara will continue to work with Elections Ontario. I am glad that they have taken this seriously and that they have tabled this report.

As I have said, this doesn't change the fact that any suggestion that anything was offered in exchange for any action is false. That has not changed, and that will not change. The fact is that we were working to keep this young man involved in the process. That's what Patricia Sorbara was doing.

We've just received this information, Mr. Speaker, and we'll take it under consideration.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is back to the Premier. I'm going to read you again a paragraph from the Chief Electoral Officer's report: "Having reviewed the evidence and findings from this regulatory investigation, I am of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act as reflected in my attached report. Consequently, I have reported this matter to the Attorney General of Ontario in accordance with section 4.0.2 of the Election Act."

Premier, if you stand with these two, you're going to fall with these two. Stand up and call for their resignations.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the sentiment from the member opposite. As I have said, we've just received this information. We received the information from Elections Ontario. The member has quoted from one letter. I will quote from the letter regarding my involvement: "Having reviewed the evidence and findings from this regulatory investigation"—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: She still works for you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'm going to ask the members from Dufferin-Caledon and Huron-Brock to come to order please—second time for both of you.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—"I am of the opinion that the actions of Premier Wynne do not amount to an apparent contravention of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act."

Similarly, in the letter regarding Glenn Thibeault, "Having reviewed the evidence and findings from this regulatory investigation, I am of the opinion that the actions of Mr. Thibeault do not amount to an apparent contravention of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act."

Mr. Speaker, we received all of this information—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Again, my question goes back to the Premier. In recent months, your government has distanced itself from alleged criminals like Ben Levin for child porn; Chris Mazza for corruption and expense scandals; and Livingston, Miller and Faist for destruction of gas plant documents.

Premier, you are degrading your office. Cut this bad apple loose and apologize to the people of Ontario.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we have just received this information today, and we will continue to co-operate with Elections Ontario, as will Patricia Sorbara. But nothing in this information today changes the fact that there was no offer for any action. Any allegation that that was the case is—

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Why don't we just listen to the facts?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is not helping.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That would be novel.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is not helping either. Thank you. Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have deep respect for Elections Ontario and for the work that the Chief Electoral Officer does, and I understand that they are moving now into the next phase.

But the fact is that what I did and what we have done on this side was work to keep a young person involved in the party. That is what we did.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Regrettably, I've heard some unparliamentary language. I can't identify the individual, and I wish they would never say that again.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Premier, you can spin it any way you want. You can talk about getting a young person involved. You can issue press releases saying the tapes exonerate your staff. But clearly the proof is in these documents. There are contraventions.

You can do the right thing, Premier. You can be what you said you would be at our inaugural meeting of this Legislature. You can do politics differently. You can be open and transparent.

Premier, apologize to the people of Ontario. Let's get these people's resignations, and let's move forward.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I received this information this morning; I've said that repeatedly. Patricia Sorbara will continue to work with Elections Ontario. The fact is that Elections Ontario has moved into the next phase. The Attorney General's office and other authorities will now take that investigation to the next stage. I will take all of this information under advisement.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Today the Chief Electoral Officer said, "I am of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara constitute apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act."

I want to ask the Premier: When is she going to actually fire Pat Sorbara and remove Mr. Lougheed from his position as the chair of the Police Services Board in Sudbury?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have answered this question six times already, I will answer it once again. We just received this information. I've said from the outset that we will work, and that Patricia Sorbara will work, in full co-operation with Elections Ontario. We have done that. We will continue to work with the authorities. As I just received this information this morning, we are taking it under advisement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Elections Ontario is non-partisan. They've investigated the actions of the Premier's office and her operatives, and they say that Gerry Lougheed and Pat Sorbara broke the law.

When will the Premier admit that this has happened and ask for their jobs? When will she make sure that she does the right thing and remove these people from their responsibilities because they no longer have the public trust?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, let's just be clear that that is not what the letters have said. That's the point

that I was making earlier: that in terms of the facts, nothing has changed. Elections Ontario is talking about allegations. They're talking about apparent allegations, about the appearances.

The fact is that there was no commitment to offer anything in exchange for an action. That has not changed from yesterday to today. I made a decision about appointing a candidate. We worked to keep the past candidate involved. That's the fact.

Elections Ontario has taken this seriously, and I'm pleased that they've taken it seriously. The process will unfold, but nothing in terms of the facts has changed from yesterday to today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The report is one thing, but what actually happened is something else altogether. It's time this Premier comes clean on exactly what happened around the stink in Sudbury.

When this Premier—this Premier—learned that David Livingston was the subject of a police investigation, she rushed in to say, “That is not the way a government should operate. That is not the way a Premier's office should conduct itself. And it is not the way my office operates.”

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Now, Elections Ontario has an unprecedented finding in their investigation, and they say that the Election Act was in fact broken. When will this Premier fire Pat Sorbara and make sure that Mr. Lougheed is removed from his position of public trust on the police services board in Sudbury?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Once again, let's just be clear, Mr. Speaker: That is not what Elections Ontario has said. Elections Ontario is talking about “apparent” actions, “apparent contraventions.” The facts have not changed from yesterday to today. Elections Ontario is going to the next phase. They have referred the complaint to the Ministry of the Attorney General for further examination by the proper authorities. This is in process.

Mr. Speaker, I received this information this morning, as everyone in the House did. That I have said—

Mr. John Yakubowski: There's enough of a smell on it. Do the right thing. Cut her loose.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. We now have Mr. Lougheed, Ms. Sorbara, Elections Ontario and the OPP with one version of what happened in Sudbury, and the Premier with another version of what happened. So we have two different versions. We talked about that yesterday. It's clear the Premier is still sticking to that today.

The Chief Electoral Officer said this: “Having reviewed the evidence”—reviewed the evidence—“and

findings from this regulatory investigation, I am of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act....”

Now, this Premier has her version of the truth and everybody else has a different one. Premier, it must be getting pretty lonely, is what I would say. Whose version of the truth can the people of Ontario believe?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important to read closely what has been said: “in the opinion” and an “apparent contravention.” There isn't a conclusion in that language. What Elections Ontario has done is they have passed this process on to the next phase, through the Attorney General's office, for further examination by the proper authorities. That is what the next stage is. We all just received this information this morning, and I will take it under advisement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Premier says that nothing in fact has changed, but that is not true. Today, Elections Ontario confirmed that there was wrongdoing in Sudbury. This is a non-partisan organization. This non-partisan organization did their jobs, and they came to the conclusion—

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's not what they confirmed. You keep making things up. Stop putting words in their mouth.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —that Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed offered bribes to Andrew Olivier. Now, the question remains, will this Premier do the right thing? If she's not prepared to actually fire Pat Sorbara and Mr. Lougheed, will she confirm that she will be appointing an independent investigator and prosecutor for this process to go forward?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think it's time to actually take a look at what happened. In this by-election, the best candidate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Actually, don't stop the clock. Order, please. Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, Speaker. The people of Sudbury have spoken. In this election, the best candidate—and the only party with a positive message—was elected. I understand that hurts the party opposite.

We've been very clear. The Premier has said over and over again: “We did have a conversation with a past candidate about how to stay involved, how to continue to make a positive contribution.” I think nobody here would suggest that those aren't conversations that happen within parties.

The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock resigned her seat and accepted a paid position on the same day. She said, and I quote from the Toronto Star, “Scott, who will now be the party's paid election readiness chair”—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, this is a shameful demonstration of a government that simply will not take responsibility for its actions. The people of this province deserve so much better than this, Speaker. They deserve to have trust in the Premier's office. They deserve to have trust in the government. They deserve to have the people who are working for the Premier and the government to be above this kind of accusation. And when this kind of accusation comes forward, they deserve to have a Premier who steps up to the challenge and behaves in a way that's dignified and appropriate for a Premier. That's not happening today.

I will ask the question one more time: Will this Premier fire Pat Sorbara? Will she make sure Mr. Lougheed is no longer the chair of the police services board in Sudbury? Will she appoint an independent prosecutor from outside of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'll continue with this quote from the Toronto Star from January 10, 2009: "Scott ... conceded it is 'a very' difficult 'issue'" — a very difficult issue — "to get MPPs, who have no pension plan, to resign." So —

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it is not credible —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry will come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it is simply not credible for the opposition parties to pretend —

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —that these aren't conversations that don't happen in the political process. I suspect there were difficult conversations with Jonah Schein, with Paul Ferreira, with Laurie Scott, the member from Kawartha Lakes. In politics, this happens. We have talked —

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The member from Renfrew will come to order. The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound will come to order, and the member from Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order. It's the second time for two of you.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Randy Hillier: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you apparently don't mind living and conducting your office in the shadows of shame, disgust and malfeasance. But, Premier, your actions cast a shadow —

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I will ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Carry on.

Mr. Randy Hillier: But your actions cast a long shadow over this whole institution and every member in it. It also casts a long, dark shadow over the province — your actions.

Any Premier — any honourable Premier — would take this seriously. You mentioned that the Chief Electoral Officer took this matter seriously, but clearly you are not. You are prepared to bring harm and injury to this institution.

Will you do the honourable thing and relieve Sorbara and Lougheed from their jobs until this matter is cleared up in the courts?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me once again say that we all just got this information, Mr. Speaker. What I will not do is take rash advice from the other side of the floor until I've had an opportunity to consider all of the information.

Let me just read from the report. This is page 8 in the report. What it says is, "To form an opinion that conduct amounts to an 'apparent contravention' as set out in s. 4.0.2 of the Election Act, I must be satisfied, based on the evidence obtained in my investigation, that there is a prima facie case of a contravention."

"This means I must be aware of sufficient facts that, if proven correct, would constitute a contravention of the Election Act or the Election Finances Act."

He goes on to say, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence." That is what he says in the report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Hillier: Again to the Premier: Premier, the Chief Electoral Officer cannot prosecute. However, the Chief Electoral Officer is an independent, non-partisan officer of this House. He has a duty, and obviously he's taking it seriously.

Everybody knows what the right thing to do here is. The Chief Electoral Officer has spelled it out clearly that these allegations are a prima facie case of wrongdoing. He has recommended further action. How come you won't take any action at all, Premier? No action at all. Have those two bad apples removed and do the honourable thing and take away this dark shadow that you're casting over all of this institution.

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just go over what I quoted, and let me just add to it and go a little bit further. Again, what the electoral officer says: "This means I must be aware of sufficient facts that, if proven correct, would constitute a contravention of the Election Act or the Election Finances Act. When I form an opinion that there has been an 'apparent contravention', I do not weigh questions of credibility or balance competing facts as between the parties. I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

That is what the Chief Electoral Officer has said, Mr. Speaker. He has passed on this information to the next phase of his process.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is directed to the Premier. Premier, you're talking about taking this to the next phase. You say that you'll take Elections Ontario's report under advisement. The fact is that political interference is at the heart of this scandal.

Will the Premier commit today to take herself out of this process? Will she take her Liberal Attorney General out of this process? And will you appoint an independent prosecutor to prosecute these charges?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I respect and trust the processes that we have in place in Ontario. I respect that Elections Ontario and our judicial system are of the highest quality in the world. I'm sorry that the NDP doesn't have that faith in our institutions in Ontario, but we do on this side of the House.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're going to let this process play out. I will once again read into the record what the Chief Electoral Officer has said. He said, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges," of whom we have excellent members in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order. Start the clock.

Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the Premier: Premier, it's in fact your disrespect of the process that's put you in this mess in the first place. The law is clear.

I'll say to you again that the Chief Electoral Officer has said his report is "now in the hands of the Ministry of the Attorney General," your Liberal cabinet minister. I'm looking at the minister, the Attorney General, who's sitting in the Liberal front bench, and I'm asking: Will the Premier take out of the hands of the Liberal Attorney General and put into the hands of an independent prosecutor from outside Ontario the responsibility to actually prosecute these charges?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: The Chief Electoral Officer is an independent officer of the Legislative Assembly. The Chief Electoral Officer has a process in place to investigate complaints. As has been mentioned previously on numerous occasions, this process exclusively involves non-partisan officials within the Ministry of the Attorney General.

No political staff, including myself or members of my political office, have anything to do with this process. The system is already designed so that only non-partisan officials handle any complaint. The third party has been made aware of this process.

It is my understanding that the matter is being dealt with by another prosecution service.

ONTARIO HERITAGE WEEK

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. This week is Ontario Heritage Week. Yesterday, we had the members of the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario here with us in the Legislature—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members have the right to ask questions in silence.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: As a past president of ACO Cambridge, I'm proud to have worked with the ACO. The Architectural Conservancy of Ontario was incorporated in 1933. They had a vision to preserve the best of Ontario's architecture and natural areas that continues today.

Preserving our heritage boosts tourism and provides economic benefits such as revenue from the film industry. Murdoch Mysteries chose my riding of Cambridge as a filming location. Heritage tourists stay longer and spend more, and this is a growing area of tourism. One year, the annual heritage house tour in my riding of Cambridge brought in 600 visitors from around the province.

Speaker, could the minister please tell the members of this House about Ontario Heritage Week?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to start by wishing all Ontarians who are celebrating Chinese New Year a happy new year.

I also want to thank the member from Cambridge for her advocacy around heritage here in the province of Ontario. Heritage Week is an amazing opportunity to put a spotlight on promoting and protecting our province's heritage, and I'm glad the member from Cambridge has embraced these values.

Heritage Week in Ontario started on Monday and will go until Sunday, February 22. Throughout communities across this great province, there will be many different events, so I encourage all members to get out there and support their communities as they celebrate the heritage here in the province of Ontario.

I know the MPP from Kingston and the Islands attended a great event this week to kick off Ontario Heritage Week. The event took place at the Ryerson athletics centre, which we know is a historical site where the Toronto Maple Leafs won eight Stanley Cups. I hope all members have the opportunity to celebrate this amazing week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you, Minister. I know that each year there's a theme chosen to celebrate Ontario's Heritage Week.

When I was president of ACO, one year we asked the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee and city council to designate the Shade Street arena in Cambridge under part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act. Not only was it the oldest operating arena in North America; it was beautifully built in 1922 with yellow brick and a roof full of skylights to allow in the natural light. One of the reasons it was designated was its culturally significant history. Hockey player Bobby Hull played in this arena,

and Toller Cranston, the famed figure skater, made his name while he skated in the Shade Street arena. The citizens in my riding of Cambridge are very proud of our sports heritage.

Could the minister please tell the members of this House about the theme for this year's Ontario Heritage Week?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I'd like to thank the member from Cambridge for her question. The theme for this year's Heritage Week is "Play. Endure. Inspire. Ontario's Sport Heritage." It's a celebration of our athletic past here in the province of Ontario. It's a reminder of our sport legacy, which has enriched our province and has provided inspiration to countless Ontario athletes. It's given us a very strong foundation from which to grow and develop sport and athleticism here in Ontario.

This year's theme is especially fitting because, as we know, in four and a half months we will have the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games, which will take place in the GTA and throughout the province of Ontario. Our athletes will be in the spotlight this summer, and I know that they'll build Ontario's strong sport heritage and also make some history of their own.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. John Yakubuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, the report from Elections Ontario is not ambivalent; it is clear. There is an apparent breach of the rules. They have broken the law according to the Chief Electoral Officer. They have broken the law.

Premier, you have claimed to be a leader. I ask you to show some of that leadership. You talked about always acting in the best interests of Ontarians with a commitment to transparency, to openness and to accountability. Show that you are accountable and cut Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed loose, at least until the time that this investigation is complete, the Attorney General has completed their investigation and the OPP have completed theirs.

Show some leadership and have these people step aside so that the people across this province can believe there is some integrity left in this government.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me just once again read what the Chief Electoral Officer has said: "To form an opinion that conduct amounts to an 'apparent contravention' as set out in S. 4.0.2 of the Election Act, I must be satisfied, based on the evidence obtained in my investigation, that there is a prima facie case of a contravention."

"This means I must be aware of sufficient facts that, if proven correct, would constitute a contravention of the Election Act or the Election Finances Act."

1110

He goes on to say, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges."

That is what the Chief Electoral Officer has said, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakubuski: Premier, leadership is not by demonstrating how long you can stonewall. Leadership is about doing the right thing, even if it hurts, even if it's an admission that something wasn't right on your part.

I guess we could ask: Are you protecting Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed because they were working under your direct orders? Did they make those offers under your direct orders? Or will you do the right thing, respect the report from the Chief Electoral Officer and send these people into the penalty box? At the very least, if you're not going to fire them outright, put them in the penalty box until this matter can be cleared up. On behalf of the people of Ontario, I ask you: Do the right thing.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, let me try this one more time. I'm quoting from the Chief Electoral Officer. He said, "I am neither"—

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Listen: "I am neither"—

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Okay, don't listen. "I am neither deciding to prosecute"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Chief Electoral Officer writes: "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence." That is clearly what the Chief Electoral Officer has said.

Speaker, the people of Sudbury have made a decision. The opposition is not happy with that decision, but I think at least they need to respect that decision. The new member for Sudbury has been a very strong advocate and championing the causes that matter to the people—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Pat Sorbara is the Premier's deputy chief of staff. Right now, she is on the public payroll, and she's making decisions that affect Ontarians from one end of this province to the other.

Today, the Chief Electoral Officer said, "I am of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Lougheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act"

Apparent: obvious; certain; very, very visually clear. That's what "apparent" means. So I ask the Premier—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Stop the clock.

My attempt to have everyone put questions and answers in silence applies to everybody.

Please, Leader.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Will the Premier do the right thing and ask, or have, Pat Sorbara step aside from her position?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's hard to believe that I have to do this one more time, but I'm going to do this one more time.

The Chief Electoral Officer wrote: "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence."

I think the members of the opposition need to actually read what the Chief Electoral Officer said and respect the process.

The Premier has said repeatedly that we will fully cooperate with any investigations under way in this matter, as we have always done.

I do think it's important to remind the members opposite—and I know this isn't easy—but they had an MPP step aside after five months, and they lost a seat. The people of Sudbury were sick and tired of the negativity. They appreciated the positive campaign—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Thank you, Speaker. It was actually my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, back to the Premier: What's really hard to believe is that the Chief Electoral Officer actually says that they have never "conducted a regulatory investigation into allegations of bribery or ever reported an apparent contravention of the home statutes" of his office to the Attorney General. That's what's actually really hard to believe: that that's actually happening for the first time in Ontario under the watch of this government because of the actions that they've taken.

I talked about Pat Sorbara. Now I want to ask about Gerry Loughheed, who is actually in a position of trust, Speaker, as the head of a police services board that's supposed to be upholding the laws of Ontario. This report says that he has actually broken the laws of Ontario. So my question to the Premier is, when is she going to call for Gerry Loughheed to step aside from the position of head of the police services board in Sudbury?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I think that the Chief Electoral Officer, in his report, in his letter, at page 4, specified very clearly that they have developed a new protocol that was not in existence when they were in power. It's a new protocol: "In this protocol, any potential for placing the Attorney General in a personal conflict of interest is eliminated because the report of an

apparent contravention is made by my office directly to the Deputy Attorney General of Ontario."

Like I said earlier, I was informed that the matter is being dealt with by an independent prosecution service, not by the Ministry of the Attorney General.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the leader of the third party for missing her supplementary.

New question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure regarding the Rouge park in my riding and parts of Markham. Provincial governments of all stripes have upheld strong environmental standards for the benefit of the Rouge ever since Premier David Peterson announced that these lands would be protected. Unfortunately, the weak legislation put forward by the federal government to establish a national Rouge park fails to protect the environmental integrity of the Rouge.

As a long-time supporter of the Rouge, I've been following this controversial Bill C-40 at the federal level, the Rouge National Urban Park Act, with interest and concern. It appears that the federal Conservatives have blown a great opportunity to create a national Rouge park. Mr. Speaker, would the minister provide this House with an update regarding Bill C-40 and how, in its current form, it is failing Ontarians and the environment?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for that question. I want to thank him for his passion for saving the Rouge. He and I have been involved together for over 25 years in efforts to protect and preserve this valuable piece of land. Unfortunately, the federal government has refused to adopt any recommendations from Ontario residents or environmental groups that would strengthen environmental integrity requirements with this bill. It's incredibly disappointing that the bill passed through the House of Commons in its original weak state.

This bill, as it stands, simply fails to protect the environmental integrity of the Rouge and all the lands that surround it—and that's not acceptable. As a result, this minister and this government will not, in good faith, transfer provincially owned lands to federal ownership. Our government and I are calling on the Senate to work with the environmental groups—those who founded the Rouge in the first place and fought for it—to refer the bill back to the House of Commons and allow the bill to be strengthened appropriately.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I would like to thank the minister for this update.

I'm proud to be part of a government that will not allow weaker laws to govern this important natural landscape in my riding. My constituents will be extremely glad to know that our government is championing the need to protect the environmental integrity of the

Rouge. We have an obligation to assure that the Rouge is protected for future generations to experience and enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, some of my constituents have been hearing incorrect information from the federal Conservatives regarding our government's stance towards agriculture on these important lands. Can the minister please educate the House on our government's position towards agricultural lands within the park?

1120

Hon. Brad Duguid: Again, I want to thank the member for his passion for these lands.

Let's be clear: Our government has always supported agriculture uses as a proposed use in the park. I've met with several farming groups and representatives of the agriculture community there, to reassure them that our government has long accepted and supported agriculture as a continuing use in the park.

Our environmental partners, for the most part, have also been clear that they support agriculture uses in the proposed park, and welcome farmers as important partners in conservation. Together, we can make the Rouge a model for sustainable agricultural practices.

Again, I repeat that we urge the Senate to work with the environmental groups when Bill C-40 is referred to a Senate committee, and send the legislation back to the House of Commons to allow it to be strengthened so that the views of those environmentalists that founded the park and the views of our agricultural stakeholders can be taken into consideration.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to again read into the record a fact that was presented by the Chief Electoral Officer today in his report.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To which ministry, please?

Mr. Steve Clark: To the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Steve Clark: Obviously, it's to the Premier.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not obviously.

Mr. Steve Clark: The quote is: "no Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario has ever conducted a regulatory investigation into allegations of bribery or ever reported an apparent contravention of the home statutes of my office to the Attorney General."

This is a historic day for the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: The truth hurts, Minister. The truth hurts.

Speaker, Mr. Bisson, for the NDP, and I both wrote to the Chief Electoral Officer. The OPP are involved. The Civilian Police Commission is involved. The Office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner is involved.

When are you going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the member for Trinity-Spadina, the Minister of Labour and the deputy House leader—who is now warned—the rest of you will come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, if it weren't too late for Academy Award nominations, I would be nominating the members opposite for their feigned indignation.

The reality is that both opposition parties have had conversations with potential candidates, with past candidates, about how to continue to stay involved, how to continue to make a positive contribution.

We need look no further than the member from Kawartha Lakes-Brock. She herself conceded that it's a very delicate issue—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Thank you. Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member has conceded that it is a very delicate issue, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon is warned. The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. Of course, it isn't just the PCs who have had those conversations. The NDP has as well. We need think no further back than 2013 and the Scarborough-Guildwood nomination, where a long-standing party member was railroaded by Adam Giambrone out of the nomination, Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: My question, going back to the Premier—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: Well, you know what? There are a few Academy Awards performances going on there.

Listen, I'm going to ask a very simple question. This is a government under three OPP investigations. The Chief Electoral Officer has presented his report on his investigation. We've got other officers of the Legislature, we've got other commissions, that are investigating this government.

My question is simple: Premier, will you agree with me that we should reconstitute the justice committee, have these people attend the meeting—and let's discuss these investigations and get a full report to MPPs in this Legislature.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I hate to go back, but I'm going to. This is an article by Richard Brennan in the Toronto Star: "Temper flared Saturday when NDP provincial council blocked an investigation into a July Scarborough-Guildwood nomination won by former Toronto councillor Adam Giambrone.

"You are all cowards," said 90-year-old Joy Taylor, who along with other riding executive members has

maintained that several ineligible members were allowed to vote, giving the two-person race to Giambrone, a last-minute entry." A call for an independent probe into the results was ruled out of order.

"I am very disappointed," the president of the riding association told the Star.

So Amarjeet Kaur Chhabra, a young woman who immigrated from India and overcame childhood polio to run for the nomination, was railroaded by the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. There are times where even I have to correct my record. I apologize to the member from Trinity–Spadina. It was actually Beaches–East York.

New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Premier, in essence, the rule of law—

Interjections.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. I apologize again.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I mean, I know you don't like hearing from me, Speaker, but you're giving me a complex.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm hoping that's said in jest.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It was.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Sorry about that. New question, the leader of the third party.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Chief Electoral Officer says, "I am of the opinion that the actions of Gerry Loughheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act."

My question to the Premier is, who is responsible for giving Pat Sorbara her instructions?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The people of Sudbury made a decision to actually send a Liberal to Queen's Park, a Liberal who represented their riding. He was the only candidate who presented a positive platform, a positive campaign, and we are delighted that he is here making that positive contribution.

Here's why I believe the people of Sudbury changed their minds and chose to send a Liberal to Queen's Park. The NDP has twice rejected a budget that contained many progressive initiatives, including an increase to the Ontario Child Benefit. They said no not once but twice. They said no to families caring for people with developmental disabilities not once but twice. They said no to personal support workers who had an increase to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Elections Ontario says—the Chief Electoral Officer says, "I'm of the opinion that the

actions of Gerry Loughheed Jr. and Patricia Sorbara amount to apparent contraventions of subsection 96.1(e) of the Election Act." Who is responsible for giving Gerry Loughheed his instructions, Speaker?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, let's look at what the NDP, who seem to have left their values somewhere else, rejected not once but twice. They said no to 56,000 children who need an investment in the Student Nutrition Program. They said no to workers who deserve a fair minimum wage. They said no to aboriginal communities who benefit from the Remote Communities Allowance and the Aboriginal Economic Development Fund. They said no to people struggling with homelessness who need enhanced funding of the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative. They said no to people who rely on social assistance rates and were hoping for an increase. They said no to people living in poverty who will rely on a new Local Poverty Reduction Fund. They said no to workers and future retirees who will save for retirement with a made-in-Ontario pension plan. They said no to families who are counting on child care modifications—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Ontario's senior citizen population is projected to double from 2012 to 2036, and I am one of those people. I know the government has committed to better serving this community by delivering strong health services, creating the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan and working in collaboration with various stakeholder organizations.

1130

Speaking to my constituents, I hear frequent concerns regarding the senior community and their consumer protection. Media coverage has described multiple scenarios involving seniors being taken advantage of by businesses and unscrupulous organizations.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. That's just about enough.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Many constituents are concerned about their loved ones—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: —and relatives who may not be familiar with modern industry trends and sales tactics, making these seniors vulnerable to exploitation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You had your time.

Minister?

Hon. David Orazietti: Thank you, Speaker. I want to first thank the hard-working member from Barrie for this important question. I'm pleased to discuss our government's efforts to protect Ontario consumers, particularly vulnerable groups like seniors, who can be victimized by unfair business practices.

Our government is committed to helping seniors by providing them with protection on their transactions. In particular, Bill 55, the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, was passed to protect vulnerable Ontarians against abusive and predatory practices of some companies. The act requires clarity in contracts and mandates cooling-off periods on certain transactions, specifically door-to-door sales, which often target our seniors.

With the constantly changing marketplace, it's also important that seniors know their rights. We have an active consumer awareness team to inform, educate and empower Ontarians. The consumer awareness workshops, active living fairs and trade shows that occur throughout Ontario, with the support of our ministry, help seniors learn about industry trends and how their families can stay protected.

We're going to focus on effective legislation and far-reaching consumer protection programs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My thanks to the minister for his response and for his efforts in improving consumer protection for Ontario seniors. I've heard positive feedback from various constituents about the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services awareness campaigns and applaud any measures that encourage Ontario consumers to ask the right questions. I understand that certain sectors can be especially difficult for our older community to navigate.

Can the Minister of Government and Consumer Services speak about what he sees as the most pressing concerns for senior consumers and how he plans to address them?

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank my colleague from Barrie for her advocacy for seniors in her riding.

I'm pleased to address a couple of major concerns for seniors that have been detailed in the media lately. First of all, we're working to protect seniors as they monitor their finances. In certain cases, widows and widowers must manage their finances for the first time after relying heavily on a spouse for years. We help seniors from being taken advantage of in these situations by requiring clarity in contracts and implementing a 10-day cooling-off period.

We've also noted that many seniors are moving to condominiums; they need less space than they once did. We're working with this community by reforming the Condominium Act for the first time in 15 years, so that seniors on fixed incomes are not left without options with respect to mandatory qualifications for condo managers and affordable dispute resolution mechanisms. These improvements will protect the growing number of condo-dwelling seniors.

Also, we're continuing to identify, on the Ontario Consumer Beware List, important issues that impact our seniors, and I look forward to continuing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
New question?

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, the Chief Electoral Officer, in doing his duty today, is essentially asking that the Attorney General get this matter before a court of law, which is her and her ministry's responsibility. It's not the Chief Electoral Officer's job, as you know or ought to know, to try this matter. He has no authority to do that, nor can he convict or acquit. He can only recommend, which he has done today, and point out that the Attorney General bring this matter forward. He's done his duty today by pointing out the wrong that has been done.

It's your government's job to get this matter to the ultimate judgment of a court, so I ask you today, will you direct your Attorney General to expedite this matter and put it before a judge as soon as possible?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the analysis of the Leader of the Opposition, and I know the Attorney General will want to comment in the supplementary.

I just want to be clear, because there are a couple of things that he said that I think are not exactly what the Chief Electoral Officer said. Just to remind everyone of what he said: "To form an opinion that conduct amounts to an 'apparent contravention' as set out in s. 4.0.2 of the Election Act, I must be satisfied, based on the evidence obtained in my investigation, that there is a *prima facie* case of a contravention."

"This means I must be aware of sufficient facts that, if proven correct, would constitute a contravention of the Election Act or the Election Finances Act."

He goes on to say, as the Leader of the Opposition has said, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges." And so it is absolutely the case that he has passed that on to the Attorney General.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I didn't really hear an answer. You're laying out a process, as you guys so often do. The fact of the matter is, it's time for this matter to be put before a judge. Only the Attorney General can do that. I am asking you to direct her—not her directly, but her ministry, which is in your authority—to expedite this matter. Let's settle it once and for all. These people deserve their day in court. By not allowing it to go to court and settling this matter, you're not only dragging down your office, you're saying the OPP are wrong to investigate this matter. Now you're saying the Chief Electoral Officer is wrong. You're saying the opposition is wrong. You're saying the media is wrong. You're saying the people of Ontario are wrong. Well, ma'am, you are wrong. You're delusional in this case. Do the right thing: Fire the people, apologize, and get it before a court.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned previously on numerous occasions, this process exclusively involves non-partisan officials within the Ministry of the Attorney General. No political staff, including myself or members of my political office, have anything to do with this process. It's the chief prosecutor's office that deals with this process, and I find it very offensive that a member of the third party knows exactly that and continues to let the public believe that we direct prosecution from my office. It's very clear in the letter from the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Speaker.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's to the Premier. To maintain the public trust in the administration of justice, Speaker, if something looks like a conflict, it is in the interest of justice to remove that perception. That's why the Liberal government appointed an independent prosecutor when Michael Bryant was facing charges.

Will the Premier do the right thing in this case, do the same thing that the Liberals did when a Liberal cabinet minister was facing an investigation, and appoint an independent prosecutor today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I said it twice already in this House: This matter is being dealt with by an independent prosecution service and it has already been sent this week some time to the Public Prosecution Service of Canada. It's the third time I've said it. I hope that you will respect the process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, when Michael Bryant, a former Liberal cabinet minister, was under investigation, there was a prosecutor from outside of Ontario in charge of that investigation. That was the right thing to do. This whole perception of justice not being done has to be removed from this process so that the public trust can be upheld. That is the bottom line.

Now, today, the Chief Electoral Officer said that one of the Premier's closest advisers, her deputy chief of staff and campaign director has, in his opinion, broken the Election Act. Now it's time for the prosecution of that accusation.

Will the Premier do the right thing and appoint an independent prosecutor from outside of Ontario right now, today?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, Mr. Speaker, nobody has been charged, and I repeat for the fourth time that this matter is being dealt with by an independent prosecution service. It's being dealt with by the Public Prosecution Service of Canada—not Ontario, Canada.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Timmins—James Bay, come to order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You've never seen the deputy? You've never met the deputy?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to recognize the member, but before I do, the member from Timmins—James Bay was still talking while I warned him.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, I apologize, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener Centre.

SPECIAL-NEEDS CHILDREN

Ms. Daïene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, for young people who have special needs, whether it's difficulty speaking or mobility issues that stop them from getting around, the proper care can help them lead a more fulfilling and independent life.

I've heard from constituents in my riding of Kitchener Centre about their needs for community-tailored programming. We have a wonderful example of this in my riding of Kitchener Centre at the KidsAbility facility that opened in June 2011. Kids and parents now have access to therapy space and a large double gymnasium.

Minister, can you please inform the members of this House what you are doing to improve services for children and youth who have special needs?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for an important question and for being at the event with me last week at the KidsAbility Centre.

Our Special Needs Strategy is focused on supporting children and youth with special needs to get timely and effective services through early identification, coordinating services and making rehabilitation services more seamless from birth right through to school years. When I was parliamentary assistant to this ministry, I travelled throughout the province and heard from families, researchers and service providers on this strategy, and it informed the work we're doing now.

Last year, we invested \$5 million a year to help children's treatment centres. I want to say that at this centre, KidsAbility, the money we have given them is to help core rehabilitation. But what is very, very exciting is that through an additional \$62,500 in one-time funding to reduce wait-lists, KidsAbility was able to completely eliminate assessment wait-lists through our funding. That means that when a family goes there—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

VISITORS

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you for indulging me. I just wanted to ask the members to recognize and welcome my daughter Abigail and my granddaughter Beatrice, who have just arrived from Shanghai, in the members' west gallery. Thank you.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to recognize Arnella Csongradi, who is joining us here from the beautiful riding of Don Valley East.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to acknowledge a delegation from MY Canada: Lia Milousis; Christian Helmond, from Lion's Head, Ontario; Kathleen Rogers, and Anthony Dube. They met with me, and I thank them for their interest in democracy.

ALEX BEDUZ

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I would hope all members of the House would help those of us here in the PC Party say goodbye to Mr. Alex Beduz, who has served very ably behind the chair there as our director of legislative affairs for many years.

He goes on to the Senate. No, he's not appointed to the Senate; he's going to work for the Senate. I'm sending him ahead of myself to clear the way for my appointment. He doesn't know that, but I've just told him.

Thank you, Alex, for your hard work and your dedication. We are really, really going to miss you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Soo Wong: I know they're coming through very shortly to the east gallery—the members and relatives of mine from the Wongs' Association of Ontario. As they celebrate Chinese New Year they'll be joining the Legislature this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our guests, as always.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

M^{me} Gila Martow: Bonjour, monsieur le Président. Je suis la représentante pour les affaires francophones du caucus conservateur en opposition ici, et je veux faire un petit rapport.

J'ai visité une réunion sur les affaires alimentaires pour les femmes avec mon collègue libéral des Mille-Îles, son district. C'était vraiment quelque chose de très, très intéressant. C'était en Italie, ce mois de février.

Je veux aussi mentionner qu'il y aura une très grande réunion cet été en juillet à Berne, Suisse, pas seulement pour les femmes; c'est pour les hommes aussi, les députés qui représentent les pays francophones.

Aujourd'hui, comme on a entendu, tout le monde porte des rubans rouges. On veut donner des félicitations de la nouvelle année à tous nos visiteurs chinois, et on a des vietnamiens qui parlent français vraiment. Je veux dire, en chinois, Gong Hay Fat Choy. On a beaucoup de célébrations aujourd'hui en Ontario et même à Thornhill, mon district.

Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président. J'espère qu'on pourra parler beaucoup de français ici à la législature de l'Ontario.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Ms. Cindy Forster: This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, mandating that our province be fully accessible by

2025. Last week, an independent report revealed that Trinity College Provost Mayo Moran confirmed that at this government's rate, we're nowhere near reaching that target. The report reiterates what accessibility advocates, the AODA Alliance and supporters have been flagging for four years, confirming that in the last 10 years, 1.8 million affected Ontarians who face barriers have not seen any significant improvement to services or access.

Moran's report also echoes that OSSTF, OECA and EFTO call for the need to develop specific standards in the areas of education, health and residential housing. The Minister of Economic Development, Infrastructure and Employment responded, claiming, "We're already moving on some of these recommendations." I challenge this government to disclose what, when and how. If it was that serious about these recommendations and the report, it should have made the report accessible to start with when they first released it.

This report is a wake-up call to the government's leadership to stop dithering and to commit to making accessibility a priority by developing the standards and ensuring we're not just paying lip service to those people who need it most.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Cristina Martins: In December I visited the Perth Avenue co-op, a great housing facility in my riding of Davenport. I met with residents of this vibrant community and had a round-table discussion around affordable housing.

An issue that came up was the end of the federal government's operating agreements with co-operatives and other housing providers. When these agreements conclude, nearly 200,000 Canadian households depending on rent-geared-to-income housing assistance will be left out in the cold. Almost half of these are households in Ontario.

The vast majority of these agreements, including the contract with Perth Avenue, will expire in 2020. The federal funding necessary to avert this crisis is modest. The Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada estimates that only \$6 million over the next five years is required to maintain these co-op homes. Despite this, the federal government has been silent on this issue and has sat idly by as a number of these vital operating agreements have already expired.

I have already spoken to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing about this important issue and have urged the Prime Minister to take action. I want to lend my voice to this issue once more. Our federal partners need to make a commitment to continue providing these absolutely critical funds, and this commitment needs to happen now.

CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL AUTOSHOW

Mr. Michael Harris: As temperatures hit new lows, I encourage snow-weary Ontarians to get out of the cold

and into a car at the 42nd annual Canadian International AutoShow.

The Trillium Automotive Dealers Association has put together another world-class show, bringing more dynamic, interactive content than ever before, along with the stunning display of over 1,000 cars and trucks ready to roll.

The Canadian International AutoShow has a well-earned reputation as not only the most impressive but also the largest consumer show of any kind in Canada, with over 300,000 taking part in the annual tribute to metal and wheels.

Get up close and personal with the latest models, look to future concepts or gaze into history with priceless classics on display. With more than 125 exhibitors and 40 automotive brands represented, there's a little something for everyone.

This year's theme, "Life Is in Motion," is about the way that we live now—connected at all times, technologically in sync with not just our mobile devices and one another but with our vehicles as well.

While TADA is fuelling our dreams, they're also raising money for Prostate Cancer Canada with the Rock the Road Raffle, which will see one lucky visitor drive off in a 50th-anniversary-edition Mustang GT Coupe with \$22,000 in custom modifications.

So bundle up the family and head down to the Metro Toronto Convention Centre for a show that will get your motor running while raising money for an important cause.

FIREFIGHTERS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: Firefighters provide an invaluable service to our communities. As first responders, they keep us safe, they give us peace of mind and they risk their lives in the service of others. In return, it is the government's responsibility to ensure that they are not unnecessarily put at risk.

This afternoon, I will be sending a letter to the Liberal government about a tragic loss we experienced in our community in Durham earlier this month. On February 8, Adam Brunt, a firefighter hopeful from Bowmanville, tragically lost his life during a cold water training exercise in Hanover. This was an accident—one that is currently under investigation—but there are many disturbing questions that must be answered about the lack of safety in the private safety training industry in Ontario.

Private pre-training service courses, such as the one Adam was taking, are not regulated in our province. Sadly, Adam's loss is not an isolated incident in an industry in desperate need of regulation. Though these courses are technically optional, students are encouraged to take them to be competitive and hopefully get a job.

The government has spoken at length about the importance of protecting our first responders, yet that same support isn't afforded to them as students. Instead, students are put in an environment where proper use of

equipment and even the use of proper equipment isn't regulated.

I call on the government to take immediate action and commit to regulating the private safety training industry for firefighters. Firefighters dedicate their lives to keeping us safe, and now it is our turn to return the favour.

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Mr. Han Dong: I rise today to share the happiness of the celebration of the lunar new year, the Year of the Goat. Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean communities in Ontario will be celebrating across the province today.

Chinese New Year is a celebration of Chinese heritage and culture, two things that are particularly interesting to me and many in my riding of Trinity-Spadina. The lunar new year is the most important holiday for the Chinese community.

It's unclear when the exact beginning of the new year celebration in China was. Normally, it's said to start from the year-end religious ceremony during the Shang dynasty, 1766 BC to 1122 BC, but, interestingly, it was actually the Han dynasty—same spelling as my first name as you notice—206 BC to 220 AD, that established the official day of the Chinese New Year.

1310

According to tales and legends, the beginning of the Chinese New Year started with the fight against the mythical beast called "Year," or in Chinese, "Nian." Nian looks like an ox with a lion's head and inhabits the sea. At the night of New Year's Eve, the "Year" or the Nian will come out to harm people, animals and properties. Later, people found that the "Year" fears the colour red, fire and loud sounds—therefore, firecrackers.

I want to invite everyone to celebrate the Chinese New Year, the lunar new year, across the province.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ms. Laurie Scott: I want to talk about the implementation of the new social assistance management system that occurred in November of last year. As it turns out, the new program, which cost \$240 million, never worked. This computer snafu went from being called a minor glitch to a very serious problem in 24 hours.

Confidential ministry documents show that problems were identified in October 2013, and its implementation was delayed in March and again in July 2014. The government always knew there were problems. It's obvious that they weren't fixed, and they went ahead with the program anyway.

Now the program requires an additional \$16 million and a third-party adviser to tell us what front-line workers have been saying for months: that SAMS—the acronym for the system—does not work. This money could have paid for a lot of food, heat, hydro, dental appointments and housing for our most vulnerable citizens.

The ministry may choose to point the finger at the front-line staff, but it's a system that is broken. A process that used to take 21 days to turn around now takes months. I've heard of cases where it has taken four hours to update just an address change into the system because it keeps rejecting it.

Front-line case workers now are so burdened by the system, they're unable to meet with constituents, take calls, complete paperwork and get the cheques out on time. Municipalities where they manage Ontario Works have tried to step up to the plate, but the ministry needs to resolve the problem as soon as possible to support our most vulnerable citizens.

WONG ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the Wong Association of Ontario. This morning, I had the pleasure of joining the Wong Kung Har Wun Sun Association, also known as the Wong Association of Ontario, to celebrate the unveiling of a plaque from Heritage Toronto.

The Wong Association has played an important part in the history of Toronto and Chinatown since its foundation in 1912, making it one of the oldest Chinese family associations in Canada. Wongs have actually been in Canada since before Confederation.

The journey to Canada was not an easy one for many Chinese Canadians, who faced discrimination through the Chinese Exclusion Act and many hardships upon their arrival. Chinese family groups like the Wong Association were essential in helping new Chinese immigrants adjust to life in Toronto.

My own family also benefited by the support from the Wong Association. I recall my mother taking both my siblings and me to the Wong Association every weekend for settlement support.

In 2011, the Wong Association was honoured by the Governor General of Canada with their own family crest in recognition of their "indelible contribution to the development of our nation" made by the Wongs for over the last 150 years.

I want to thank the Wong Association of Ontario for inviting me to be a part of the ceremony this morning and for joining us in the Legislature this afternoon. I wish everyone celebrating Lunar New Year happiness and prosperity. Gong Hay Fat Choy. Gong Xi Fa Cai. Xin Nian Kuai Le.

CARLETON UNIVERSITY

Mr. John Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to speak about Carleton University in my hometown of Ottawa and to recognize Dr. Runte and all the leaders here from Carleton today. I look forward to meeting them later on this afternoon.

In our highly competitive and increasingly knowledge-based economy, the skills that students are learning at

Carleton will help them take their place among the best and the brightest that our province has to offer.

I'm proud to say that two of our children—Kirsten, my daughter, and our son James—are both graduates of Carleton, and my father worked at Carleton 40 years ago. If none of you have been to Carleton University, it's a beautiful campus that has grown over 40 years, bounded by the Rideau River and the canal. It's really quite spectacular.

Carleton also has a long-standing reputation as a university that promotes research excellence and enjoys many partnerships around the world. It has built a well-deserved reputation as a leader in areas as diverse as public affairs, journalism, engineering, high technology and international studies.

We have a number of graduates from Carleton in this Legislature. I know that the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, the Minister of Tourism, the government House leader and the member from Eglinton-Lawrence are all graduates of Carleton University. Having said that, I would invite you all to room 228 between 5 and 7 tonight to enjoy their hospitality and get a chance to let Carleton display the kind of great institution that it is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here presented to me by a great number of people in the riding.

"Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and quality of life for future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which have significant human and financial costs;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county, Ontario, on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full and comprehensive review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give particular emphasis to (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can be practically and efficiently recycled or reused so as to not require disposal."

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this petition. I attach my signature, as I agree with it.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is widespread agreement that a rail link connecting Union Station and Pearson airport is needed;

"Whereas the plan to run diesel trains on this route is bad for our health and the health of our planet;

"Whereas electric trains would be better for our health and the health of our planet;

"Whereas electric trains would allow for more stops along the route and greater access to desperately needed transit in the GTA;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario commit to the electrification of the Union Pearson Express and make a firm commitment now to the health of our communities, the health of our planet, and to Toronto's transit network."

I couldn't agree more, and I'm going to give it to Fardin to be delivered to the table.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario is a province of immigrants, representing over 200 countries and speaking more than 130 languages; and

"Whereas Ontario is the primary destination for newcomers to Ontario, receiving more immigrants than the combined total of most of Canada's provinces and territories; and

"Whereas Ontario is dependent on skilled immigrant labour to fill jobs, 2.5 million of which are estimated to be created in the next 10 years; and

"Whereas a stronger immigration partnership with the federal government will allow Ontario to work with employers and communities to assess labour force needs and bring in highly-skilled workers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act, 2014."

I fully support the petition, and I'll give my petition to page Natalie.

1320

TAXATION

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Stop the Carbon Tax" petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

This is signed by hundreds of people from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. I'll hand this over to page Inaya.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry is responsible for the governance and management of forestry;

"Whereas Resolute Forest Products holds 44% of the sustainable forest licence in the Abitibi forest;

"Whereas Resolute Forest Products have announced their intent to give up their wood rights;

"Whereas the sustainable forest licence is a critical element in the marketability for economic development in the town of Iroquois Falls to potential business interests;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Appeal to the Ministry of Natural Resources to institute a moratorium on the transfer of the SFL for the wood rights being abandoned by Resolute Forest Products in the Abitibi River forest ... to ensure that new entrants into the marketplace are able to apply for the SFL."

I wholeheartedly agree, attach my signature and send it down with page Niko.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is for the Making Ontario's Roads Safer act.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government is committed to ensuring the safety of drivers, passengers and pedestrians on Ontario's roads and making the province North America's most cycling friendly jurisdiction; and

"Whereas, on average, one person is killed on Ontario's roads every 18 hours, and one person is injured every 8.1 minutes; and

"Whereas drivers who use cellphones while driving are four times more likely to be in a crash than non-distracted drivers; and

"Whereas evidence has shown that Ontario's impaired driving laws need to be strengthened to apply sanctions for driving under the influence of alcohol to those impaired by drugs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer act, 2014."

I will add my name to the petition and give it to William of Kitchener Centre.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here that was presented to me by Bryan Smith. Bryan is the chair of the OPAL group, which is Oxford People Against the Landfill. He has been gathering them around the riding for some time now, and they keep coming in. I think by now we have enough signatures to cover the total number of people within my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the purpose of Ontario's Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to 'provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.' RSO 1990...; and

"Whereas 'all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.'—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario."

Thank you very much for allowing me to present this petition on behalf of Bryan Smith.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Madame Fleurette Rioux. She is from my riding, in Chelmsford. It reads as follows:

"Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

"Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

"Whereas five provinces and many US states already have some sort of gas-price regulation; and

"Whereas jurisdictions with gas-price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

"Mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my good page Amber to bring it to the Clerk.

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Arthur Potts: Gong Hay Fat Choy, Speaker. I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas some establishments have" established "unfair tipping practices in which a portion of tips and gratuities are being deducted and kept by owners; and

"Whereas employees in establishments where tipping is a standard practice, such as restaurants, bars and hair salons, supplement their income with tips and gratuities and depend on those to maintain an adequate standard of living; and

"Whereas customers expect that when they leave a tip or a gratuity that the benefit will be going to the employees who directly contributed to that positive experience;

"Whereas most establishments do respect their employees and do not collect their tips and gratuities unfairly and thus are left at a disadvantage compared to those owners who" do;

"Whereas other jurisdictions in North America such as Quebec, New Brunswick and New York City have passed legislation to protect employees' tips;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That all members of" the assembly "support Bill 12, the Protecting Employees' Tips Act, 2014, and help shield Ontario employees and businesses from operators with improper tipping practices while protecting accepted and standard practices such as tip pooling among employees."

I agree with this petition, will sign my name to it and leave it with page Eileen.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have received more petitions with regard to winter road maintenance from Dean's Home Hardware in Port Sydney. The petition reads:

"Petition in Support of Improved Winter Roads Maintenance.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

"Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

"Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario's highways are safe for travellers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor."

I support this petition and will sign it.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; and

"Whereas police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; and

"Whereas this impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; and

"Whereas this legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and

"Whereas negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the Attorney General's office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause."

It's my pleasure to affix my signature and give this petition to page Victoria.

1330

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, which I'd like to read as follows:

"Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

"Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

"Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

"Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

"Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the #1 recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario."

Speaker, I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Muntder to carry it for me.

Speaker, I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Muntder to carry it for me.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Ms. Laurie Scott: "Petition in Support of Improved Winter Roads Maintenance.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

"Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

"Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing snow and ensuring that Ontario's highways are safe for travellers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous

delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor.”

This petition has been signed and is still continuing to be signed all through Haliburton county, and I thank the people for collecting the signatures, and I hand it to page Riley.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

PROTECTING INTERNS AND CREATING A LEARNING ECONOMY ACT, 2015 LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES STAGIAIRES ET LA CRÉATION D’UNE ÉCONOMIE D’APPRENTISSAGE

Ms. Sattler moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d’emploi.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’m very pleased to rise today in this House, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to speak to Bill 64, the Protecting Interns and Creating a Learning Economy Act.

Some of you will know that before I was elected, I was director of policy at a research firm that specialized in post-secondary education. Since my election, and in particular since taking on the critic role for training, colleges and universities, I’ve been given an opportunity that few policy researchers have been given before: a chance to put policy into practice, to draw on my own research, to inform legislative change and shape the public debate.

This private member’s bill is based on findings from a research study I led for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario between 2010 and 2013, which involved surveys of more than 10,000 Ontario students, 3,600 faculty and a telephone survey of 3,300 randomly selected Ontario employers. As well as being evidence-based, my bill is also strongly supported by stakeholders across the post-secondary labour market and economic development sectors. I’m very proud to have had the support of those stakeholders in developing and refining this bill.

I want to particularly thank and recognize three of those stakeholders who joined me here this morning at a media conference: Claire Seaborn from the Canadian Intern Association, Naguib Gouda from Career Edge, and Peggy Jarvie from the University of Waterloo, the world’s largest co-op provider, who joined me here this morning and Claire and Naguib are in the gallery to support my bill.

The purpose of Bill 64 is to expand high-quality work-integrated learning programs for post-secondary students and end the proliferation of exploitative, unpaid internships.

Work-integrated learning is the umbrella term for co-ops, internships, field placements, practicums and other kinds of work-experience programs that are offered at Ontario colleges and universities. They can be mandatory or voluntary, they can last a few days or up to a year, but the important thing is that they are integrated into a student’s program of study and include a strong pedagogical component, enabling the student to critically reflect on his or her workplace experience.

By providing more opportunities for post-secondary students to gain relevant work experience while they are studying, my bill will help reduce unethical and often illegal unpaid internships that exploit graduates’ desperation to get career-related experience after they finish school, and simply provide free labour for employers. Too many graduates feel that an unpaid internship is the only hope they have of getting a job in their field. They know that work experience matters and is perhaps the most important factor in determining whether they’ll be able to get a job.

As Ontario continues to struggle from the recession, youth unemployment remains higher today than it was in 2007, and young people face significant barriers entering the labour market. One in five young people who are not working today has never held a job, and that includes increasing numbers of post-secondary graduates. This creates a vicious cycle of “can’t get a job without experience and can’t get experience without a job.”

To address this crisis, business organizations like the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Conference Board of Canada are leading the call for a much greater focus on post-secondary work-integrated learning programs. Last October, the chamber urged government, education providers and employers to work together to allow more students to reap the benefits of work-integrated learning. Progressive think tanks like the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives have made similar recommendations, urging much greater use of innovative work-integrated learning programs to address youth joblessness.

There are two parts to my bill. The first schedule is about college and university work-integrated learning programs, and the second schedule is about unpaid internships.

Schedule 1 brings together students, post-secondary institutions and employers, as well as stakeholders from the economic development and labour market sectors in a provincial advisory council on work-integrated learning.

The council’s mandate is to make recommendations to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on how to engage more employers in providing paid work-integrated learning experiences; how to improve oversight of unpaid work-integrated learning and better support post-secondary institutions to deliver quality work experiences; and how to ensure that qualified students are

able to access these programs across faculties and fields of study. By increasing the number of paid opportunities, students will be able to earn while they learn, helping to offset tuition fees that are higher in Ontario than in any other province.

Finally, the bill defines work-integrated learning and establishes criteria to ensure quality workplace programs. This is a response to concerns that are raised when students on placement are asked to do filing or similar menial tasks, work that does not provide any educational benefit to the student and simply offsets payroll costs for the employer.

Section 2 of my bill amends the Employment Standards Act to protect students in work-integrated learning programs and prevent illegal unpaid internships. Currently, the Employment Standards Act does not apply to secondary or post-secondary students who are doing work experience, and it also doesn't apply to individuals who are receiving training that meets six very narrow conditions. While the Premier and the Minister of Labour have said publicly that this is enough to prevent unpaid internships, unpaid interns know better. Too many employers are using the training exemption to avoid paying their interns, regardless of whether the conditions for exemption are met. Just take a look at Kijiji or Craigslist or Reddit, and you'll see hundreds of ads for unpaid positions.

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New Democrats strongly supported the legislation that was passed in the fall that brought these groups under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to allow students and trainees the right to refuse unsafe work. We believe, however, that more is needed to protect students in work-integrated learning programs.

Under my legislation, secondary and post-secondary work-experience students and trainees will be covered by basic Employment Standards Act protections, such as limits on hours of work, guaranteed breaks, leaves of absence and vacation days. They will continue to be exempt from the minimum wage provisions of the ESA, which is exactly the model that is in place right now in the Alberta Employment Standards Code.

In addition, my bill introduces new requirements to ensure that employers aren't illegally using unpaid interns to do the jobs of paid staff. Like many of you, I was shocked to learn last summer that a Ministry of Labour enforcement blitz found that 42% of employers with interns were not meeting their legal responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act.

My bill takes proactive measures to protect interns by requiring the publication of a poster about interns' rights to be posted conspicuously in Ontario workplaces, and requiring employers to provide written notice to both the intern and the ministry about conditions of work and whether the act applies. This will allow the collection of data on the extent of internships in Ontario, which is a huge gap in our knowledge and something we simply do not have access to right now.

Finally, the bill creates a clear and transparent system to allow anonymous and third party complaints about

contraventions of the act. Right now, we have unpaid interns who fear that if they report their employer for a violation of their rights under the Employment Standards Act, they will be blacklisted from ever being able to get into the career, which is why they were doing an unpaid internship in the first place.

Economists know that unpaid internships are bad for the economy. They privilege those who can afford to work for free, who have families who are able to financially support them. Employers who rely on unpaid interns as their talent pipeline risk losing out on an enormous pool of potential talent because they are excluding those who can't afford to work for free.

This legislation is critical to my riding of London West, a region that has been hard hit by the collapse of the manufacturing sector but is home to two of the largest and finest post-secondary institutions in Ontario: Western and Fanshawe. Our young people in London are bearing the brunt of the recession. There was an 11.2% decline in the proportion of youth who were employed in London between 2007 and 2014, a decrease greater than any other Ontario city.

We recognize that our economic success relies on our ability to attract and retain young talent, and there is no better retention strategy than making sure there are jobs for graduates after they complete their diploma or degree.

The evidence is clear. Local employers who invest in training paid co-op students or interns are very likely to offer employment after the work placement ends, which keeps jobs in our community. It connects young people to the employers and the workplaces where they've done their placements.

This week, the government launched a review of the Employment Standards Act and indicated that they were interested in knowing what kinds of changes need to be made to protect precarious workers. What better place to start than with unpaid interns who are perhaps among the most precarious and most vulnerable workers in our province?

It's time to end the exploitation of young people in illegal, unpaid internships. It's time to create a better system of oversight for students who are doing work placements through their post-secondary or secondary school of study, and it's time to give trainees and students the basic workplace protections that we all have and they deserve.

Ontario students need more opportunities to gain relevant workplace experience while they are studying so they don't feel compelled to take an unpaid internship after they graduate. This bill will make a huge difference for people in my riding of London West and across this province, and I urge all MPPs on all sides of the House to support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to thank the member from London West for bringing forward this bill and for her concerns around internship and the importance of experiential learning in Ontario. I'll be sharing my time with the member from Davenport.

As a previous employer, I understand the benefits of working with students, both in high school and in post-secondary. At Portobello Manor, I had the opportunity to work with a variety of students working towards becoming nurses, personal support workers, recreation leaders and even chefs. Because of this experience, I realized the importance of hands-on work in preparing students for their future careers.

As an employer, the responsibility of properly filling out paperwork, caring for the students' well-being and providing livable conditions was always important to ensure that interns and co-op students remained engaged, healthy and safe. This was not a burden when weighed against the benefits of mutual growth.

Our government is interested in taking a more in-depth look at this private member's bill presented by the member of London West. I am sure that we can all agree with the overall objective of protecting interns and creating more opportunities for experiential learning.

Je suis certaine que nous pouvons tous nous entendre sur le fait que tout travail mérite une compensation financière.

There is a narrow exemption in the Employment Standards Act for co-op students, trainees and the self-employed. This exemption is for accredited university and college programs to give their students valuable workplace experience while pursuing their degree. These rules have been in force for many years, and our government has been active in terms of increasing awareness.

J'ai toujours trouvé que pour mieux profiter des programmes d'alternance travail-études et de stages, il est nécessaire que l'employeur laisse la chance aux étudiants de vraiment vivre l'expérience pratique de leur travail. Il ne faut pas seulement leur donner les tâches subalternes, mais plutôt créer un environnement où le dialogue et l'exploration sont possibles. Ceci apportera le meilleur résultat pour l'étudiant ainsi que pour l'employeur.

With Ontario's youth unemployment and under-employment rates, it is important for our government and institutions to concentrate on work-integrated learning. The hands-on approach to education allows students to learn in the environment of their future career and to get acquainted with the realities and practice of their chosen field.

It is important not only to look at what needs improvement, but also to acknowledge the positive actions that have been taken.

In recent years, Ontario's universities and colleges have increasingly started offering a variety of experiential learning opportunities to combine traditional classroom teaching methods with hands-on collaborative activities. They have partnered with industry, professions and government to enhance students' post-secondary experience.

An innovative and exciting business which I had the pleasure to meet with a few months ago has demonstrated a serious desire to help the employees of the future.

GasTOPS, which stands for Gas Turbines and Other Propulsion Systems, works closely with Carleton University's aerospace engineering program and brings in around five students every year for co-ops. This helps train the next generation of high-calibre professionals in the field and allows students to gain real experience in their domain.

La Cité, située à Ottawa, sert aussi d'exemple en tant qu'établissement d'enseignement postsecondaire qui se préoccupe des carrières futures de ses étudiants. À La Cité, il y a deux types de stages à faire : les stages en milieu pratique et les stages en milieu coopératif. Ces stages offrent aux étudiants une précieuse expérience en milieu de travail.

Pour notre part, le gouvernement travaille étroitement avec le Conseil des universités de l'Ontario pour offrir de l'appui aux 40,000 étudiants en placement coop dans nos établissements d'enseignement postsecondaire.

We have also expanded the 30% Off Ontario Tuition Grant to cover the final year for students who are enrolled for five years due to co-op programs. This not only gives an additional \$1,780 in financial support, but also the incentive to take the time to develop practical skills while pursuing post-secondary education.

This expansion means that there can be more integration of students in the workplace and they will have a better understanding of their options after graduation.

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Another initiative of the government is the Productivity and Innovation Fund, which supports a number of projects that are redesigning courses to have more experimental learning opportunities for post-secondary students. We know that employers are not simply looking for candidates with credentials such as certificates and diplomas, but the ability to thrive in the hands-on work that is done.

En tant qu'adjointe parlementaire au ministre du Développement économique, je sais très bien que l'Ontario a besoin d'une main-d'oeuvre hautement qualifiée pour réussir dans le contexte d'une économie de l'avenir. Avec la mise en oeuvre de plus de programmes d'apprentissage par l'excellence et avec la collaboration entre le gouvernement, les établissements d'enseignement postsecondaires et les industries, nous pouvons atteindre nos objectifs et ainsi créer un climat favorable afin de permettre une meilleure compréhension et une meilleure synergie entre les étudiants et la main-d'oeuvre.

We're always open to hearing what we can do to protect our vulnerable workers, and look forward to debate on this bill.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise this afternoon and to add to the debate for Bill 64, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

A previous version of this bill was then known as Bill 172. It was introduced into the Legislature during the

previous session and was in fact the member from London West's first private member's bill.

Schedule 2 of the bill deals with the protection of interns and vulnerable workers, and this portion of the bill was introduced by the former member for Davenport in the last session as Bill 170.

It's incredibly important that we are discussing these sorts of issues right here in the Legislature.

With Ontario's economy reeling under the so-called steady hand of this Liberal government, which is currently embroiled in three ongoing OPP investigations, more and more young Ontarians are having difficulty entering the workforce, even with post-secondary education. My riding, Chatham-Kent-Essex, and the surrounding area have lost over 10,000 jobs in the past decade. We have been incredibly hard hit by the job losses that have been characteristic of this government's reign. But among the hardest hit by Ontario's fragile economy are our province's youth. More and more young Ontarians are pursuing college and university educations, and that is certainly a positive trend. However, youth unemployment remains troublingly high. We must ensure that young people of this province not only have an opportunity to attend post-secondary education, but are also ready to step into the workforce.

Right now, my Chatham constituency office is interviewing to have a co-op student from a high school in my riding who is interested in politics in order to give that student the experience that they need. We've never had a co-op student in the office before, but we were recently approached by the school due to the student's enthusiasm to gain expertise and experience. These sort of real-world learning opportunities are invaluable.

Prior to politics, Speaker, in my training and development company, I actually had several co-op students working with me to gain that valuable experience. It was always my goal for these students to leave feeling that they had made a difference and picked up real-world experience. I've actually given many motivational talks to co-op students in preparing them for the workforce from the perspective of an employer's point of view.

Just this week, St. Clair College down in my area hosted a private job fair at their main campus in Windsor for industrial mechanics students which featured 25 local employers. St. Clair College also has a beautiful campus in Chatham. The college has hosted these types of fairs for a number of years in an effort to help put their graduates into the workforce. This helps the school attract future students who look at the employment rates of graduates, and of course it makes a world of difference for students who are able to transition into a job more easily.

St. Clair College's chair of skilled trades, Rob Chittim, was quoted by Blackburn News just today about the initiative, and I quote: "We hear the negative all the time of the largest rate of unemployment in the country, here in Windsor, and the largest rate of unemployment for 18-to-30-plus-year-olds." He also said that 80% of St. Clair College's students in the pre-apprenticeship pro-

grams—clearly the college is offering an excellent program that is delivering results for its students.

However, not all work-integrated learning programs are created equal. All too often, we hear of the horror stories from students who claim their work activities are simply performing menial and unpaid routine tasks that do not add relevance or best practice experience for future employment.

Schedule 1 of Bill 64 addresses these concerns. By amending the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to include a definition of "work-integrated learning," some structure will be added to the process.

The bill states, "(c) in the case of a co-operative education work term, a job description for the work term has been approved by the post-secondary institution, or, in the case of any other work placement, the work, the learning outcomes and the extent of supervision are agreed to in writing by the post-secondary institution, the employer and the participant before the work placement begins."

By requiring a college or university, the employer and students to essentially get it in writing ahead of time, it's more likely that all parties will receive true value from the work-integrated learning program.

The bill goes on to say, "(d) in the case of a co-operative education work term, the work is consistent with the approved job description, or, in the case of any other work placement, the work is consistent with the agreed learning outcomes."

This requirement will help to ensure that students are in fact given the opportunity—the learning opportunity—that they signed up for, instead of finding themselves performing work that is of little relevance to their area of study or their career ambitions.

Schedule 1 would also establish an advisory council on work-integrated learning that would report directly to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The mandate of this council is to advise the minister on issues regarding work-integrated learning in general.

While we're concerned that this council could simply become just another voice among the sea of advisory panels that are often ignored by this government, this panel has the opportunity to make post-secondary school education in Ontario stronger. It also has the potential to use taxpayer dollars with little end result or benefit. Unfortunately, there is no way to guarantee that the minister will actually listen.

The last thing we want to see is the creation of yet another report that collects dust on the shelf in a minister's office. The Liberal government has a rich history of completely ignoring reports or picking and choosing from recommendations based on, perhaps, political expediency. Their disregard for the Drummond report comes to mind, and surely the generation of that report must have cost the province's taxpayers a fair amount of money. We support the goal of the council, but our lack of confidence in this government has us concerned about its ultimate efficacy, or in other words, the ability to bring about change.

Another problem area that the bill seeks to address is the decentralized nature of information about work-integrated programs. Currently, employers who are interested in participating in work-integrated learning programs such as co-ops must contact individual institutions to see which programs are available. While this set-up works for many employers, it could certainly be more efficient.

Bill 64 also calls for the creation of a website for sharing information about available opportunities. Importantly, this would provide information regarding the supports and resources available to employers interested in participating in these programs.

Speaker, for many employers, cost is a deterrent for participating in work-integrated learning programs. If information is hard to find, one cannot expect a business to go out of its way to look for it. It's hard enough for businesses to keep their doors open in this province after over a decade of disastrous financial mismanagement by the Liberal government. We must make it easier, not harder, for interested businesses to participate in valuable work-integrated learning programs.

One of the other goals of this bill is to ensure that no student enrolled in a post-secondary program that includes a work-integrated learning program is denied the opportunity to take part. Essentially, the member for London West argues that if a student has the grades and meets the criteria, they should be able to benefit from work-integrated learning. This is a noble goal, but it may be more of an ideal goal rather than a practical one. More must be done to ensure our students are able to enter the workforce with job-ready experience, and aspiring to this goal will certainly help.

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In 2013, the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance produced a policy paper addressing youth employment concerns. Now, Speaker, I've met with student representatives from this group on several occasions, as well as other student advocacy groups and other stakeholders, to discuss the challenges facing Ontario's youth as they step into a very rocky economy. One of their recommendations called for an anonymous reporting system whereby unpaid internships suspected to be in breach of regulations can be identified. Members of this House, and certainly members of the opposition, know the importance of whistle-blowers. Without the courage of whistle-blowers, we may have never learned about the Ornge air ambulance scandal.

One of the biggest concern about this issue goes beyond the scope of this bill. Our caucus is incredibly concerned over the lack of a jobs plan from this government. No matter how work-ready the youth of Ontario are, if there are no jobs for them to pursue after they graduate, it will be of little help. This government must recognize that our province is experiencing a jobs crisis and our youth are suffering because of it. Hundreds of thousands of Ontarians are out of work today, and more must be done to get this province back to work.

Speaker, on the issue of unpaid internships, perhaps there could be something other than just paying these

students. Something could be done to help, perhaps, offset some of the costs that they incur. I'll give an example of one that comes to mind: perhaps providing them with transportation so they can get to and from, or letting them know about dress codes so they can buy nice suits, like the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport has.

Again, salaries sometimes come with problems. But you know what? For example, TAs earn between perhaps \$10,000 and \$15,000 a year. That was never intended to be a salary that they could live on. So perhaps what we need to do is find more ways to be more creative to compensate these students.

In conclusion, it's my sincere hope that more jobs will, in fact, start to be created here so that our best and brightest will no longer be forced to move to other provinces or states to find gainful employment.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It was a pleasure to address this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to start by saying how very, very proud I am to stand in support of the member for London West's private member's bill that will help end illegal unpaid internships and bring meaningful work-integrated learning opportunities to the young people of Ontario. I want to commend the tireless effort of the MPP for London West in this regard, as well as, in fact, one of our colleagues at the federal House, the member for the riding of Davenport, the MP named Andrew Cash. He has been working on some of these issues as well, and they have been making a fantastic team.

There are other folks who have been involved in this effort, Speaker, and I think it's important to acknowledge the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, the Canadian Federation of Students, and advocates, like Andrew Langille, who have been fighting to end the exploitation of vulnerable interns in this province.

The unfortunate thing is that the Premier really hasn't lifted a finger to fix this problem. Her Liberal government is failing miserably when it comes to supporting students and young Ontarians who are struggling to get a start in the work world. A whole generation, in fact, is facing a future without a lot of options these days. They're not just seeing the kind of opportunities, frankly, that many of us saw when we were in their shoes, the kind of opportunities that their parents saw back in the day. Those opportunities just don't seem to be there for folks.

I'm not talking just as the leader of the Ontario New Democrat Party. I have a son who's part of that generation. He has also been someone who has seen post-secondary education costs skyrocket in the last couple of years as so many young people have been struggling with that issue. In fact, his generation is paying the highest post-secondary tuition fees in the entire country. Not only will they graduate with the most debt, but they will also have the fewest employment opportunities in Ontario's history. It's a sad commentary on the lack of effectiveness of this Liberal government.

The lucky few may graduate to find paid work where they can apply the skills they've learned while they were in school, but that's, unfortunately, the lucky few. The sad truth is that many will be lucky to find any minimum wage job, and many of them will end up, for example, in the service industry. We know that's what happens these days.

More and more graduates are bogged down with education debt. They're stuck in their parents' basements because they simply cannot afford to find a place of their own. A fact that the government would rather sweep under the rug as well is that as many as two thirds of Ontario students aren't even eligible for the Liberals' tuition grant that has been touted by the members across the way. The bottom line is, many, many kids don't actually qualify to receive that tuition grant.

The official youth unemployment rate, as people in this chamber probably know, is nearly 15% right now. That's double what the provincial average is in terms of unemployment for everyone else. Students and new grads are one of the fastest-growing groups of people using food banks in this province. What kind of sad commentary is that on the situation here in the province of Ontario: that students and young people, recent graduates, are the fastest-growing users of food banks? It is quite something to be horrified by. I hope the Liberals are paying attention.

The reality is that, to add insult to injury, because there is no oversight and no accountability for employers in this province, many of them are taking advantage of these desperate young people, people who are desperate for opportunities. Too often, young workers are forced, if they want to get any kind of experience whatsoever, to provide their labour for free—another practice that the Liberals have allowed to proliferate here in Ontario.

Too often, the entry-level jobs that once existed in Ontario are now unpaid, illegal internships. Young people aren't asking for the moon; they're just asking for a fair chance to be valued and respected and compensated for their skills and their labour. They deserve that respect. That's the very least they deserve.

They expect that the government of Ontario will protect their rights to earn a living instead of protecting the interests of, in some cases, very exploitative corporations and employers.

With the member from London West's private member's bill, New Democrats are actually offering protection for vulnerable workers in this province and some badly needed hope for young people and their families.

I hope this government will set aside its partisan interests and ensure that this bill is actually passed today, and not only that, Speaker; that it actually moves through the legislative process and becomes law in this province. Why? Because we owe it to our children and our grandchildren. We owe it to them to end illegal, unpaid internships in this province, and we owe it to actually update our education system and its connection to work by bringing fairly paid work and work-integrated learning into the province of Ontario.

These initiatives are long past due. We've seen too many kids losing hope and unable to make their way in life. That's unacceptable, and I look forward to all parties passing this legislation today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'd like to thank the member from London West for bringing this bill forward—this very important bill. She's absolutely right that experiential learning opportunities are of significant importance. The on-the-job training these programs provide can have enormous benefits, both for youth and employers.

Co-ops and other work placements give students a chance to understand the ins and outs of the profession they're pursuing. They provide exposure to the work environment at some of the companies that the students are interested in.

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Experiential learning also gives employers a chance to develop the skill sets that are needed in their field and see how well their student employees fit in with the company. Students who graduate with work experience seem to have an advantage, an extra edge academically and professionally. Indeed, some companies end up hiring the students they have employed in co-op programs after graduation.

I agree with the member from London West, and our government agrees, that these programs are of vital importance. I myself participated in a paid placement or co-op program when I was a student at Ryerson in the applied chemistry and biology program. While I had my colleagues, my friends at U of T, reading about high-performance liquid chromatography, a technique used in analytical chemistry, I was actually using a high-performance liquid chromatography instrument in my placement.

I know that our government is working hard to engage stakeholders and hear their feedback on Bill 64, a process that we began back before the 2014 election when this bill was first introduced. We are already working closely with the Council of Ontario Universities and with Colleges Ontario, two groups specifically mentioned in Bill 64 as members of the proposed advisory council on work-integrated learning. We do this in order to support the 40,000 co-op students at post-secondary institutions across the province. Moreover, our Productivity and Innovation Fund supports a number of projects across the province to include more co-op and work-integrated learning opportunities for our post-secondary students.

Again, this bill is in line with the government's perspective on experiential learning, and I certainly agree with providing more provisions to protect co-op students, interns and other vulnerable workers. It's important to note some of the work our government has already been doing on this important issue.

In November, just five months after we came back, following the June election, Bill 18, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, received royal assent. This bill pays particular attention to co-op

students. It ensures that they receive the workplace health and safety protections that are laid out in the Employment Standards Act.

The Ministry of Labour has also been using social media to reach out to help everyone, including young workers, understand their rights under the Employment Standards Act. I know that the Ministry of Labour recently invested an additional \$3 million in proactive enforcement, with a special focus on cracking down on unpaid internships across a variety of sectors.

All of this is to say that many of the policies in Bill 64 build on the government's vision that if you perform work for someone, you're covered by the Employment Standards Act and you deserve to be paid.

There is a narrow exemption for co-op students, trainees and self-employed that has been on the books for many years and is intended to allow accredited post-secondary programs to give their students valuable work experience. But it seems that Bill 64 speaks positively to this point as well, and aims to increase paid work placements for students, similar to the one I participated in as a student.

Indeed, the bill's proposed advisory council on work-integrated learning would—and here I'm quoting from the bill—"advise the minister with respect to ways to increase work-integrated learning opportunities, particularly paid opportunities" and "make recommendations for improving the regulation and oversight of unpaid work-integrated learning opportunities." I agree that these are valuable goals that deserve our consideration.

The Protecting Interns and Creating a Learning Economy Act also makes a number of valuable points when it comes to the dissemination of information on workplace rights. It proposes that a poster be displayed by employers who have students working for them, and that this document would clearly explicate the rights of the student and obligations of the employer. In the same vein of providing as much information to experiential learners and interns as possible, Bill 64 proposes that trainees who do not meet the definition of "employee" under the Employment Standards Act are given written notice on the following four points: first, the sections of the act that do and do not cover the individual; second, the reasons that the individual is not considered an employee; third, the length of the placement and description of the work to be performed; and fourth, how many hours the individual will be working.

All of these points make sense to me. It's valuable to ensure that this information is provided to trainees and co-op students, and it's important that we protect vulnerable workers from exploitation.

Like I mentioned earlier, I'm proud that our government has been cracking down on unpaid internships.

Again, I'd like to thank the member from London West for bringing this bill forward. I know that our government is always looking to ensure that we protect Ontario's vulnerable workers and to increase opportunities for young people to get valuable work experience, as I did.

I'm sure that my colleagues the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities are going to have their staff look at this bill very carefully and will continue to consult with their stakeholders about its content.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up in support of Bill 64 from the member from London West.

She believes that research and evidence should inform policy. She believes that the evidence should actually make legislation stronger, and I think that we can all agree that that's an admirable goal.

There are 300,000 people in Canada who are currently working in unpaid internships. Bill 64 will prevent the exploitation of unpaid internships in Ontario by increasing employment awareness of obligations under the Employment Standards Act.

Earlier today, some you may have seen that Peggy Jarvie, the ED for Co-operative Education and Career Action at the University of Waterloo, was here in support of this bill. That has a lot of weight, Mr. Speaker, because the University of Waterloo is truly a national leader around paid co-operative student learning programs. It is a model that should be replicated across this province and across this country. When I've done student round tables at the University of Waterloo, students have told me that because they are paid for their co-operative experiences, this allows them to go to university. So it is very much a program which lends itself to equality.

The value of experiential learning cannot be questioned. The evidence is there. It has already been cited by the member from London West. The value to our economy cannot be questioned either. There is a macro-economic effect when students are paid in the workforce, which has a trickle-down effect on the entire economy. And if there was ever an economy that needed more assistance, it would be the economy of the province of Ontario.

I want people to remember something. There is a greater weight of responsibility that we have, as legislators in this place, when a piece of legislation like Bill 64 comes before us. Three young people died last year. They were unpaid interns; they were co-operative students. They did not know their rights. They did not know their rights because they were not in a paid position in the province of Ontario. This is a very common issue. This is a worker safety issue.

We want young people to have these experiential learning opportunities. We want them to go to work in the morning and come back to their families at the end of the day. This piece of legislation, if adopted by the Liberal government, would ensure that that actually happens.

There's a moral responsibility for us to do the right thing today by supporting Bill 64. It obviously has our support. If there was ever an opportunity for us to reach across the aisles and work together, it would be on this piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It is a pleasure to join the debate today. It's an exciting day for New Democrats, as we have anticipated the introduction of the bill from our colleague the member from London West. I want to congratulate her on her efforts. She has been a champion for young people and for the issue of advocating for unpaid interns and those who find themselves in precarious work positions in the province of Ontario. Unfortunately, she has had to do a lot of work and a lot of consultation.

A lot of data exists on the nature of precarious work in the province of Ontario. Go figure. This economy that is touted by the government to be progressive, innovative and responsive—but, needless to say, there is a glaring gap in our employment standards when it relates to young people and their attempts to join the workforce and labour market entry.

The bill proposed by the member from London West identifies that issue, plugs those holes in the legislation and gives young workers in the province of Ontario an opportunity and hope and a reasonable level of expectation that they will find gainful employment and enter into a career, to be productive members of society.

Some of the most important parts of this bill, which I believe fix some of those issues, are the areas in the Employment Standards Act—those glaring gaps in protection for young people.

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They would seem so reasonable in developed countries that you wouldn't even expect them to exist in the province of Ontario. However, simply informing members of their rights, informing young workers of their rights as interns and as unpaid workers or co-op students, would be reasonable. That sounds like something we should be doing, although it is not a provision within our Employment Standards Act; something that would be so minuscule in terms of the efforts put forward by the province. And I would submit to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the members of the House, that it is the most important part of a young worker's experience: to enter the work site and know their rights, to know they are protected under occupational health and safety legislation and the Employment Standards Act.

The bill is reasonable in every metric and every scope. It also, of course, codifies work-integrated learning with specific criteria that outline why, and how beneficial it would be to create a pathway for co-op students and post-secondary students to be able to enter the workforce and have gainful employment.

The arguments have been made, well-nuanced. We have submissions and support from some well-recognized organizations that have studied the issue, I believe, to exhaustion. They include the Ontario Undergraduate Students Alliance, the Canadian Federation of Students, Students Against Unpaid Internship Scams and the Canadian Intern Association.

Many stakeholders understand that the time is now to protect young workers in the province of Ontario. These

issues are before you. The resolutions are before you. Please accept and understand that this is done in good faith and that you can actually achieve the results that young people and young workers in the province are looking for.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now recognize the member for London West. You have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to sincerely thank all the members who participated in the debate today. It was extremely gratifying to hear the kind of support that exists for this legislation and also the recognition of this issue as one of the most important challenges of our generation in ensuring that we're not leaving young people behind as we try to move this economy forward.

There were a couple of points that were made that I think deserve to be highlighted. The member for Chatham-Kent-Essex and also the member for Essex talked about the definition of work-integrated learning that is included in the legislation, and that to me is something that is very important.

We don't simply want our post-secondary institutions to take the job of training our workforce. Our post-secondary institutions have to provide students with meaningful opportunities to gain workplace experience but also to learn. This is not just a training program; this is a learning experience for our students, and we have to make sure that these programs that are brought into post-secondary institutions are high-quality and have a strong pedagogical component.

There was also a reference to anonymous reporting for unpaid interns. This is one of the biggest challenges. Unpaid interns who feel they have to work for free in order to get into the labour market don't feel that they have an option to report to the Ministry of Labour. The current mechanisms are completely inadequate, completely ineffective, and we need to enable young people to have a mechanism to exert their rights or insist on their rights.

I appreciate all the comments that have been made and look forward to seeing this bill move to legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. We'll take the vote at the end of private members' public business.

SERVICE CLUBS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Finance should immediately move to have a standing committee investigate the legislative and regulatory barriers and burdens facing service clubs in Ontario who serve their respective communities and conduct ongoing community service which helps alleviate the demand for publicly-funded services.

The committee shall focus on the following topics: (1) financial audits; (2) restrictive regulations surrounding fundraising; (3) taxes and fees; and (4) declining membership.

That the committee shall have the authority to conduct province-wide hearings and undertake research, and

generally shall have such powers and duties as are required to investigate the issue.

That the committee shall present an interim report to the House no later than September 1, 2015, and a final report no later than January 1, 2016.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank the overwhelming number of my colleagues that are here today. It's an important—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Huge support.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thanks, Lou. I know I'm going to get your support too.

We're here today, colleagues from all sides of the House, to talk about an important issue. It's an issue that I don't think has been given enough attention over the years. It's an issue that I would think this government, in particular, considering the amount of debt that they have, would be keen to address because of the vast benefit these organizations bring to our economy. The issue we're talking about, of course, is the important role service clubs play in communities across Ontario and the role the government can play to assist these clubs to maximize their full potential. A lot of people think service clubs have the same tax benefits and rules as registered charities. The fact of the matter is, for the most part, they don't. That's what I'm going to discuss now.

Centred around such mottos as "Service Above Self," Rotary; "We Serve," Lions; "Serving the Community's Greatest Need," Kin Canada; "Friend of Youth," the Optimists; "Serving the Children of the World," Kiwanis; and "We Share," Quota International, we can all agree that these service clubs and others bring vast benefits to our communities.

First and foremost, they are social clubs. They bring fellowship and fraternalism to their membership, which in turn strengthens the communities they serve. For young professionals or people who are new to a community, social clubs bring those people together to maximize a community's potential gain both socially and economically.

Second, beyond fellowship, these volunteer organizations serve the community need. Made up of people who live and breathe in the communities they serve, service club membership best understands their community's intrinsic values and needs, and fills the fiscal holes that government and other agencies can't. It's important to remember that the charitable work that these organizations do helps to alleviate financial burden on government coffers. Governments can't and shouldn't pay for everything.

In Ontario, the debt has become the highest in the country. The deficit is more than all other provinces combined. On top of this bleak fiscal reality, population projections are forecast to shift the province to an older age structure, which will certainly bring with it additional financial pressure. According to the Ministry of Finance,

Ontario's senior population is expected to double over the next 25 years.

Ontario already spends 41% of the provincial budget on health care, and according to TD economists, this is projected to increase to 80% by 2030. It's unsustainable. To prepare for the future, we need to consider alternatives like fostering the working relationships we already have in our communities.

Service clubs relieve the financial burden while providing intrinsic social benefits to the communities they serve. They are a win-win, which is why it is so important that we as legislators make it as easy as possible for them to continue the good work they do in our communities.

I chose to do this motion on service clubs after I hosted a local round table in my riding last April. People from various organizations attended, and frankly, I was surprised to learn about the multitude of issues and challenges they deal with on an ongoing basis that hinder their everyday operations.

Immediately following the meeting, I wrote to the Minister of Finance to articulate as best I could the challenges identified. To date, my records show that I have not received a response, but to give the minister the benefit of the doubt—the issues are complex—I will presume that the government is still thoroughly investigating the matter. I'm also looking forward to hearing from members of the government side and the NDP, and hopefully we'll get some answers from the government today.

I brought that letter with me today, Mr. Speaker, as it identifies many of the challenges and issues that service clubs face; I'd like to read it into the record.

"April 25, 2014

"Dear Minister:

"I am writing to you today after meeting with local service clubs in my riding concerning a number of issues they have identified that are hindering operations. The main message that came out of the meeting was a concern with the cost of doing business as a result of increased regulations, taxes and fees. Let me briefly touch on each of these issues.

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"The first issue discussed was financial audits. If the service club earns more than \$50,000 after expenses on a fundraiser they must pay \$4,500 for an audit. If a service club earns less than \$50,000, the audit is \$450. As a result, service clubs limit their fundraising. Minister, forcing charities to pay nearly 10% of their profit on fees is ridiculous and I question why this \$50,000 threshold is not higher and why they are being asked to pay such costly audits."

"Another problem is unnecessary regulations. At one time, service clubs were allowed to sell tickets out of province and over the phone. Today, regulations restrict these sales, leaving them unable to access the lucrative American market and other provinces. Service clubs also have problems with lottery licences as municipalities limit the number of licences issued at any given time.

This inhibits them from working on more than one project.

"A third problem is taxes. Service clubs question why they have to pay so much in tax when they are a charity. For example, on a car raffle they have to pay close to \$10,000 in taxes for that vehicle. They are also charged lottery licence fees costing up to \$9,000. On top of this, service clubs that own their own building must pay property taxes. You can see how these taxes add up.

"A fourth problem is costs associated with being a volunteer. Directors of the club must have liability insurance. Members must assume the costs of volunteer police checks and many other items. Enticing membership is already a problem for a lot of these groups; the cost of living is making it hard for people to even volunteer. This is a big problem across Ontario.

"Another concern raised was the OLG's plan for a new casino in the community. The service clubs are concerned that this will take away from their profits. One suggestion was to create a revenue-sharing program, similar to what already exists in Alberta, where the service clubs provide volunteers in the casino and receive a small fraction of profits. I would appreciate it if you would find out more about this option.

"Minister, frankly I was surprised by the amount of issues these clubs identified. It's important to recognize that these are charities working hard to pay for a variety of projects within our communities. That said, I would appreciate it if you would review these problems and respond. In the meantime, I would ask that you advise what tax exemptions or assistance is available to help service clubs.

"Thank you for your attention and please accept my best wishes.

"Sincerely,

"Jim Wilson, MPP."

Mr. Speaker, following my decision to draft this motion that's before us today, I sent a letter and questionnaire to as many service clubs as I could from right across the province, and the response has been tremendous. Over 100 service clubs responded to the questionnaire, many of them representing several service clubs across the district or area. I think that reveals the extent of public interest for changes to be made.

In fact, one letter was from the Lions Club multiple district A, which represents Lions and Lions clubs across Ontario. The multiple district A governors' council held a special meeting to discuss this motion and passed the following resolution:

"That the governors' council hereby endorses and supports the resolution presented by Jim Wilson, MPP, Simcoe-Grey, requesting the Ontario Minister of Finance to immediately move to have a standing committee investigate the legislative and regulatory barriers and burdens facing service clubs in Ontario; and further, that council hereby authorizes the MDA secretary to forward said resolution to the Premier of Ontario, the interim leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, the leader

of the New Democratic Party and the Ontario Minister of Finance."

Colleagues, I have brought photocopies of all of the responses and I'd like to bring them to Liberal and NDP representatives to use as a reference while working on this issue, and I do that in a non-partisan way.

The questionnaire asked five questions, but because many of the responses mimic the issues and challenges I already touched on in the letter I just read, in the time I have left, Mr. Speaker, I want to focus on the fifth question, "What changes could the provincial government make to better facilitate the outstanding work that you and other service clubs do?" That was the question. Here's a list of the grassroots suggestions directly from the service clubs.

In terms of regulations, the clubs suggested less administrative burden, particularly for clubs with a proven track record. Some of the clubs note that licensing reporting requirements are required at all levels of government for the same project.

Other clubs suggest implementing a simpler tax system that volunteers can easily navigate. One club noted that the tax department was even baffled by the complexity of the regulations.

The clubs suggest the government review the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp's dominance in Ontario's gaming industry and the pressure that it's putting on clubs. They note the provincial government is both the regulator, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission, and the primary operator, through the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp, often creating unnecessary red tape and duplication.

Clubs want more flexibility. One club described spending months to secure approval for a simple river race of logs and rubber turtles because the guidelines only allow rubber ducks. The Alcohol and Gaming Commission took months to approve the fundraiser. They noted that the approval process for that single application required the approval of the municipality, police, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Environment.

In terms of taxes and fees, the clubs suggest tax rebates for non-profit organizations, particularly on HST and property taxes, allowing the clubs to utilize a percentage of fundraising towards their administration.

Changes to insurance coverage: Many noted that they often need multiple policies to cover the same event. Service clubs suggest the province give municipalities the ability to grant property tax relief to non-profits, not just registered charities. Also suggested is a tax rebate on the HST. Finally, they would ask that the government make them aware of available grants and programs that might assist them in their daily work.

In terms of recruiting volunteers, service clubs suggest—and I would like to thank the Wasaga Beach Kinette Club for this suggestion—making membership fees tax-deductible or creating tax incentives for volunteers. Other service clubs asked for help with a campaign to promote volunteerism and membership drives.

Keith White from my riding, who's an honorary Lion and a Legion associate member, along with being a councillor in Essa township, suggests that better training on how to recruit and retain volunteers would benefit many clubs. He suggests simply collecting educational material now available and finding ways to disseminate it across the province.

Another idea was the creation of a provincial service club awards program like apparently they have in Saskatchewan.

I hope it's clear that there are a number of issues that need further examination. I anticipate that this is only the beginning of an in-depth discussion. My motion asks that the Minister of Finance move to have a standing committee investigate the legislative and regulatory barriers and burdens facing service clubs, and I hope the government will agree to do this today.

I welcome and encourage the support of all members. I realize that this is a complex issue. There are many departments of the government involved, but I think we should get moving on it. We need service clubs now more than ever as we face the challenging fiscal climate we find ourselves in in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you for allowing me to rise and speak on the motion today. I'm happy to say that I support the motion to call on the Ministry of Finance to look into the complex regulations that surround our service clubs.

As we all know from our constituents, these clubs do great work in our communities. My office in Fort Erie is space that I rent from the Lions Club of Fort Erie, a group that's done excellent work for seniors in that town. Regardless of income barriers, the Lions Club of Fort Erie reaches out and engages the seniors in that community. I'm proud to say they've been welcome in my office with my staff, providing space for seniors to remain active and healthy, engage one another and engage the public in services. They are truly the hub of our communities.

I say all that without even mentioning their fundraisers, which I'm very glad to say I participate in. They cook some of the best food you can find in Ontario and raise money for good causes. If you are ever in my area, I highly recommend stopping at one of our Lions Club's fundraisers. You certainly won't be disappointed.

It's just not the Lions Club that has that kind of community spirit. Service clubs throughout my riding show the same passion. Take, for example, the Ridgeway Kinsmen. They started with a group of 12 members who themselves rebuilt their club and opened a new facility just a couple of weeks ago. I'm proud to say I was there for the club's opening in Ridgeway. They'll continue to have my support, including at their breakfast coming up this weekend.

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I'm honoured to speak highly of the Ridgeway Lions from my riding, people who do great work like my

friends from Ridgeway, who carry out incredible outreach and put on equally fantastic fundraisers in my riding. I'm really blessed to have such an active and talented group putting on these fundraisers in Niagara.

These aren't the only service clubs that we should all admire. There are our great Legions across the province. We have a number in my riding. Each are as dedicated as the next. They teach proper respect for our veterans and are never afraid to give back to our communities. I'd like to personally commend the Niagara Falls branches—479, 396 and 51—130 in Fort Erie, 124 in Niagara-on-the-Lake, and 230 in Ridgeway, for everything they give back to our veterans and to our community. They support those who fought for us, and we can do our part to support them here in this Legislature, and I'm glad to support them, and I'm sure everybody else here today is.

Mr. Speaker, this is the same of all the clubs: the Kinsmen, the Lions and the Kiwanis clubs, Mr. Wilson talked about the Rotary clubs—we all have Rotary clubs in our areas as well; again, in Niagara Falls, my riding. They're incredibly respected in our community, both by our constituents and by myself. I'm also glad for the Knights of Columbus as well. My brother-in-law is a member—Andrew Howcroft—and he does great work in the city of Niagara Falls.

These groups all have a mandate to give back to their communities and to make their hometowns and their cities a better place to live. They absolutely embody the spirit of giving back to where one comes from. In the past two years—and this is important for everybody to listen to—these groups have been punching well above their weight. Around the province, so many of these clubs and groups are being faced with declining membership. On top of planning for their work, they have to worry about membership and they have to navigate through these complex regulations at the federal and provincial levels.

We can help to remove some of this pressure by addressing these regulatory issues, especially at a time when these groups need our help. Budget cuts by this government and by the PCs before them have left a lot of people struggling to make ends meet. These groups have done an incredible job of filling in the cracks created by these cuts.

These groups have all facilitated and continue to see—and think about this, and this is important for service clubs. I know a lot of people aren't paying attention right now, but you should. These service clubs are facing hydro bills that are putting their entire clubs in jeopardy. We have to take a look at that and help them.

We need to make regulations for these service clubs so we can help with their fundraisers. We hear the same message everywhere we go. The hydro rates are putting these facilities in jeopardy. I know that we heard from Mr. Wilson, my colleague. He raised the very same thought of what is going on around hydro rates.

When they're out there working in our ridings, we should be working here. When they're in our ridings, we should be working here to support them in every way that we can.

As you can see, these groups represent some of the most caring aspects of our community. If they are caught up in red tape and complex regulations at the provincial and federal levels, then I think an appeal to the Minister of Finance to strike a committee to look into solving this is a good idea.

I'd also like to quickly stress how important volunteering is for those listening here today. These groups around the province are facing declining membership, as I mentioned. We need to encourage more volunteers, both young and old, to join these clubs and make sure their great work continues long into the future. These groups and clubs support our community, so let us support them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you—I was ready to say “Madam Speaker,” but I’m late.

Let me first say I congratulate my friend from Simcoe—Grey for bringing forward this motion today. I think it’s honourable that we think of people who give a lot of time to our communities.

A saying that I always say when I meet with volunteers or service clubs—I look at them and say, “Wow, what would our communities look like if you weren’t here doing the work that you do?” That goes across all the service clubs and all the volunteers. Speaker, I think it’s very, very important that we make sure the service clubs stay alive, and I know they have been struggling.

I’m a Rotarian, a Brighton Rotarian, for the last 14 or 15 years. When I joined the club, we had over 70 members for a small community of less than 1,000 people. We’re down to about 30-some-odd now. The reality is that not all participate; they do come out to help. That goes across all the service clubs. We’re part of district 7070 in Rotary, and they tell me that right across the region, which goes from Newmarket to Belleville, they are suffering. I’m sure it’s the same across the province.

The motion outlines some of the stuff, as the member brought forward, that frankly is more of a federal jurisdiction. I think we should not just focus on what we can do here at Queen’s Park within these walls, but also beyond with our federal cousins. So I think some pressure needs to be put there.

I would say to the member that, as we progress through this—and I know he’s already started to give some good statistics today, some good examples of surveys that he sent out. Our club, by the way, has received one. I’m not sure if it has been responded to yet. But that is, I think, a good measure to try to get the message of what people really think out there. The interesting part about that is that when you task people to do something, that you ask for some information, if they take the time to fill those blanks, that is really worthwhile information; it’s not just something that they want to speak about.

Speaker, in the few minutes that I have, I just want to touch on some of the good work that the service clubs—some of the service clubs, because I don’t have enough time to do all. For example, coming up on March 14 and

15, Warkworth, a beautiful community north of the 401, is having its annual Maple Syrup Festival. For two days, I tell you, they draw 4,000 or 5,000 people. I normally end up helping for half a day to serve fresh maple syrup right off the tap and boiled right there, along with fresh pancakes. So I smell like a pancake for about a week after that, but it’s worthwhile.

Interjection.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It’s excellent.

That’s a service club not affiliated to any national service club. They just do it to help their community.

The Kiwanis Club of Quinte West, of Trenton, have a one-day lunch just before Christmas to raise funds for the Salvation Army. Can you imagine: Over lunch, about 100 people raise over \$100,000 for the Salvation Army. I’m not sure how else you could do this and help the Salvation Army do the good work that they do.

As I mentioned, we have Rotary Clubs in every community in the riding I represent, and they all do good work; for example, along with Bill Gates, who matches dollars that the clubs raise to eradicate polio. Speaker, we’re almost there. If it wasn’t for Rotary International and Bill Gates, we’d still be facing polio issues.

Mr. Speaker, we, once again, because I’m more familiar, for the last 14 or 15 years—we sponsor exchange students. We take in students from all over the world and also pay for students going out to other parts of the world. It’s a program that’s unbelievable, the benefit that these kids get from these exchanges.

I guess I’m trying to point out how valuable service clubs are in our communities, how valuable volunteers are.

1450

Once again, I cannot refrain from saying: What would our communities look like without service clubs, without volunteers? We need to encourage that, Speaker.

What the member is asking on this resolution, the best way to describe it—although we need to do everything we need to do, and I know he has already done a lot of work through his questionnaires, we’re almost trying to kill a fly with a huge sledgehammer. I think we can do the same thing. I think he set a good example of how we can do that already, and I think maybe we need to support that kind of initiative. Frankly, in travelling the province, I think clubs will be able to give us that information. I know he has had a good response, and that’s a good indication.

I would encourage the member to take that approach and bring it to the House here. Let’s see if there are ways that make sense of how we can address the issues that he has brought forward, which are very, very valid.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this motion today from the member from Simcoe—Grey, my boss.

I think all of us in this House recognize the importance of service clubs and charitable groups in each and every community across the province. They fill meaningful

roles and gaps within our social fabric and enrich our quality of life. In fact, without these clubs and groups, important services, projects, events and activities just wouldn't be there. That's why, when they speak, it's our job as legislators to listen, especially when they have such serious concerns as we're discussing here today.

We simply believe that the Minister of Finance needs to listen to these concerns, review them and take action. We want them to address them so that our service clubs and charities can continue to do the vital and necessary work they do, day in and day out, in our communities across Ontario.

I will quickly sum up—again, to repeat some of what the member from Simcoe—Grey said—the areas that not us, but the service clubs and the groups themselves have highlighted to us. These are the areas and issues of concern.

The financial audits: Forcing these charities to pay nearly 10% of their profits on fees is ridiculous. As you've heard, if a service club earns more than \$50,000, after expenses, on a fundraiser, they must pay \$4,500 for an audit, but below that, it's \$450. It's a disincentive for these service clubs to fundraise. Surely we can come up with a better solution.

When I think of Nipissing University or Canadore College, and I look at the donor wall and I see all of the service clubs that have stepped up; when I walk into our new hospital in the city of North Bay and I see the donor plaque with the service clubs that have built rooms—in fact, wings in the hospital, wings in the university, wings in the college—and this money is all earned through their charitable donations—for the province to take their slice, to dip their beak in so generously, is ridiculous.

These unnecessary regulations are also a point. Why are we restricting service clubs from selling tickets out of the province and over the phone, and they're unable to access funds in the US and other provinces? Municipalities limit the number of lottery licences issued at a time, keeping them from working on more than one project. Again, these are areas where we can do better.

When you drive down Lakeshore Drive and come over the overpass in North Bay and you see this bridge that crosses, it was built by one of the service clubs. It's a trail that runs through our entire city. It's not built by the municipality; not built by the province; not built by the feds. It's built by the money from these service clubs that have fundraised—and funded these very important projects throughout our communities.

When you think about taxes, it's a wonder service clubs are able to undertake any of these fundraising ventures at all. When you hear that service clubs, on a car raffle, for instance, have to pay close to \$10,000 in taxes for the vehicle, and then a lottery licence, costing them up to \$9,000—throw in the property taxes for the clubs that own their own building, and what's left?

When I go down to the waterfront in North Bay, when I go to the waterfront in Callander, when I go to the waterfront in Chisholm, there are parks and beaches that are built by these charities. These are the most generous

of groups. They work so hard. They run bingos, they have lotteries, they have fundraisers that raise nothing but money for other people to share.

Lastly, volunteer costs: The directors of a club must have liability insurance, and members must assume the cost of volunteer police checks, among other items. The cost of living makes it hard enough for those to volunteer. These other costs deter membership. Again, we here in the House simply have to do what the member for Simcoe—Grey is asking: We have to do better.

I should add that there is a valid concern, in communities where OLG is planning to locate casinos, about the impact this would have on the ability of charities to fundraise. Again, this is a question that needs to be addressed before any of these go forward, so that clubs can prepare, react and adjust to what they can contribute to their good work.

All we're asking, through this motion today, is for the minister to consider ways to address the hurdles facing our service clubs, our fundraising groups and our charitable groups across the province. They're vital, they're crucial, they're important and we can't do without them.

I'm proud to support this motion. I would urge members of this House to do likewise, and I thank you for this time to speak in this Legislature again.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add to motion 16 on red tape review for service clubs.

Comme pour tous ceux qui ont parlé avant moi, c'est évident qu'il y a plusieurs clubs sociaux qui sont dans Nickel Belt. Aujourd'hui, je veux vous parler plus précisément du Club 50, un club qui est à Chelmsford, dans Nickel Belt, juste pour vous donner une idée des difficultés que l'on met sur les épaules. C'est un centre pour personnes âgées. En anglais on appelle ça un « elderly persons centre ». Ils reçoivent un petit peu de financement, 21 000 \$ par année de financement, du ministère des personnes âgées. Et parce qu'ils reçoivent ça, ça ajoute à tout ce qu'ils ont besoin de faire.

Parce qu'ils font plus de 50 000 \$ de revenus, ils devront charger la TPS. Bon, charger la TPS sur les locations de salles, c'est assez évident, et sur les consommations, parce qu'ils ont un bar, ça aussi, c'est assez évident.

Mais là, qu'est-ce que tu fais avec—they ont des espèces de diners communautaires et tout le monde donne cinq dollars, qui défraye une partie du prix du diner, mais vraiment c'est un diner communautaire. Est-ce qu'ils devront commencer à charger la taxe de vente harmonisée là-dessus?

Même chose : il y a des groupes de leurs membres qui se réunissent pour jouer aux « darts », pour jouer aux cartes, pour passer le temps, faire des activités, et eux, ils vont chacun payer un petit montant pour se réunir au club. Est-ce que le club devra commencer à charger la TPS là-dessus? À un moment donné ça devient tellement difficile à comprendre qu'ils finissent par dépenser des sommes d'argent faramineuses qui n'ont rien à faire avec

les buts du club. Les buts du club, c'est de s'assurer que les personnes aînées restent engagées dans leur communauté, ont la possibilité de passer de bons moments ensemble et demeurent actives.

Mais là, tu regardes : ils doivent faire faire une vérification générale. Le vérificateur charge 9 000 \$. Ça, 9 000 \$, pour un club qui reçoit 21 000 \$ du ministère, c'est beaucoup d'argent. Non seulement qu'ils ont tout ça à faire, mais avec le nouveau projet de loi que l'on a passé, le projet de loi pour les corporations à but non-lucratif—cette affaire-là a 210 pages d'épaisseur. Là, eux autres ont reçu ça, les 210 pages. Ils l'ont imprimé. Ils ont commencé à lire ça, puis là ils se sont dit : « On s'en va tous. Peux-tu me dire ce que ça veut dire? »

1500

Pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement n'a pas mis en place un mécanisme pour aider les clubs? Ça, c'est un gros club, mais j'ai des petits clubs aussi dans Nickel Belt, le club à Azilda, le club à Hanmer, le club à Gogama. Il y en a qui sont très petits.

Là, quand ils reçoivent ça, un projet de loi avec toutes ces explications et qui est long de 210 pages, êtes-vous surpris, monsieur le Président, qu'ils aient de la misère à recruter des membres? Êtes-vous surpris qu'ils aient de la misère à recruter un président ou une présidente? Quand tu vois toutes les responsabilités qu'on a mises sur ces petits clubs-là—les clubs, tout ce qu'ils veulent faire, c'est du bien. Puis là, on leur met un paquet de règlements, un par-dessus l'autre, qui sont difficiles à comprendre.

Donc eux, ils ont été obligés d'embaucher un avocat pour leur expliquer comment ils devraient s'assurer qu'ils sont conformes à la loi. Ils n'ont pas l'argent pour payer un avocat. Ils se sont mis ensemble. Un groupe de clubs de la région se sont mis ensemble. La FARFO s'en est mêlée pour essayer de les aider. Mais lorsque le gouvernement fait des nouvelles lois comme ça, pourquoi est-ce qu'on ne prend pas le temps de donner les outils nécessaires pour que les clubs à but non lucratif ne soient pas obligés de payer des vérificateurs, des frais d'avocat, de consultants, de ci et de ça?

La proposition qui a été faite par le Parti conservateur a du bon sens. Prenons le temps de les écouter, prenons le temps de voir ce qu'on pourrait faire de mieux, parce que ces clubs-là, quand ils voient arriver des piles de règlements de 210 pages, ils perdent leur exécutif, ils perdent leurs membres, puis c'est la communauté en entier qui perd.

Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you, Speaker.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Happy New Year.

Mr. Han Dong: Happy New Year to you, too. Happy New Year to all.

I'm very pleased to have this opportunity to discuss this very important bill. First of all, I would like to say to the member from Simcoe—Grey that this is a fantastic bill, and I look forward to supporting it. It's a very important bill.

But I also want to point something out. The member mentioned that he sent correspondence to the Minister of Finance and didn't hear back from him. In fact, there was a response, to Mr. Wilson's attention. I would like to take this opportunity to read it into the record, and I'll walk across after, to give him the hard copy.

“Dear Mr. Wilson:

“Thank you for your letter regarding issues identified by local service clubs in your riding. I apologize for the delay in responding.

“With respect to your concerns regarding a new casino in a local community, the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) is modernizing gaming in Ontario to optimize revenue from its gaming assets in a responsible manner. OLG's modernization plan was designed to maximize the commercial viability of land-based gaming across the province, and ensure the success of each gaming site while balancing social factors such as responsible gaming. When fully implemented, the OLG modernization plan will increase net revenues to the province by approximately \$1 billion annually. These revenues will be used to fund vital public services that Ontarians depend on, such as health care and education.

“It is important to note that the government will not impose a gaming facility on a municipality that does not support one. A decision regarding the location of a gaming site will depend on an OLG business case that reflects municipal support and demonstrates the commercial viability of a gaming site in a particular location and region.

“Every year, the provincial budget outlines how gaming proceeds are allocated. The 2014 Ontario budget indicates that in 2013-14, gaming proceeds provided to the province by the OLG are to be spent in the following ways:

—about \$1.75 billion to support the operation of hospitals;

—“\$115 million to the Ontario Trillium Foundation”—actually, many of the associations in my riding are enjoying the support of that foundation;

—“\$10 million to Ontario amateur sports;

—“\$119 million for other general government priorities, including horse racing; and

—“\$39 million for problem gambling and related programs.

“OLG's support for the Trillium Foundation and amateur sports is an effective revenue-share program that benefits charitable and not-for-profit organizations.

“With respect to the municipal charity licences, that is the responsibility of the AGCO, an agency under the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG). I have taken the liberty of copying my colleague the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, Attorney General, so she is aware of the concerns you have raised.

“Your comments on the financial audits and the HST that service clubs must pay on the purchase of a vehicle for a car raffle are the responsibility of the federal Minister of Finance, the Honourable Joe Oliver. Accordingly, you may wish to direct your comments on that issue to” the minister responsible for that file.

"With respect to your concerns about property taxes, special provision is made under the property tax system for non-profit service clubs. Under Ontario regulation 282/98 (a regulation made under the Assessment Act), land that is owned and occupied by a non-profit service organization is taxed at the residential rate, rather than the commercial rate that would otherwise be applicable (commercial properties are typically taxed at a higher rate than residential properties).

"As well, under the Municipal Act, 2001, and the City of Toronto Act, 2006, municipalities have the option to provide property tax rebates to charities and non-profit organizations, based on parameters determined by the municipalities (there is a minimum rebate requirement for qualifying organizations, and there are optional rebate provisions at the discretion of municipalities). You may wish to speak to your local municipal office to determine whether specific non-profit service organizations are eligible for a property tax rebate.

"Thank you again for writing."

I took that opportunity to read this letter because I do think it responds to some of the concerns that the member raised.

I want to say that service clubs are extremely important in my riding as well. Today, I went to the Wong Association to see how many people they've helped over 100 years. I look forward to supporting this bill and further debating this bill as it goes through the legislative process.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm quite pleased today to speak on this very important issue that has been brought up by our interim leader, the member from Simcoe-Grey: "That, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Finance should immediately move to have a standing committee investigate the legislative and regulatory barriers and burdens facing service clubs in Ontario...."

A lot has been said already today. Service clubs in our communities are certainly the backbone for the work that they do in our communities. We all know that they've played a long, vital role across the province. They strengthen our communities. Young people join them. I know the Rotary Club sponsors young people to go to different countries for a year. In fact, the MP who is representing Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock now did that Rotary exchange and continues to go out to speak of the merits of that program. These young people and people in general—they gain both socially and economically.

I think there's nothing better than service clubs which are made up of members of communities to best understand the needs of their communities. They also fill the fiscal holes that government and other agencies can't fill and maybe shouldn't fill. In rural Ontario, with our smaller communities, there's nothing truer said than that.

A lot of problems have been highlighted. I will give you a few examples, if I could. For example, the Rotary Club of Haliburton wanted to give funds for a band shell

to be built—they got some Trillium money, too—to assist for a band shell in the park. But the park was owned municipally. So they couldn't use their proceeds from lottery tickets for that; they had to have another venue to try and fundraise money separately—again, you can only ask the community so much—for a specific project.

I know that there are many, many Rotary clubs that I have in the area and I have at least a dozen Lions Clubs. Since I've been an MPP, and you're out to these events more, you notice that their membership is declining. It's hard to get volunteers, and as the cost of living goes up, it really costs to volunteer out there.

1510

I want to bring up that these service clubs—there are no administrative dollars. They all pay for their service clubs through memberships in their organizations. We ask a lot of them and we should not be throwing up more barriers to them. When the member from Simcoe-Grey brought this up as a motion, I thought it should be done as soon as possible.

It is complex. I'm going to highlight a few of the problems. For example, in the lottery—if you make a certain amount of money, the cost of your audit has gone from \$450—if you make less than \$50,000—to up to \$4,500 to get an audit done.

I know that when clubs want to enhance their own structures—for example, curling clubs or Legions—their lottery monies cannot be put back into their aging buildings. I know that in Woodville, for example, the curling club needs a new ice plant but the money from a raffle cannot be used for that purpose. Legions face the same dilemma, and we know that our Legions are aging.

There is the opportunity to be able to sell tickets online to different provinces and different countries. We can look at that. Insurance was brought up, the cost of insurance for them; a simpler tax system they can navigate; and just more flexibility in general to have fundraising events that can then be used to further help their communities.

We could talk a long time about this, and I'm out of time. I just wanted to say to the member for Simcoe-Grey: Well done. We'll be supporting this and look forward to the government's action.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd also like to commend Jim Wilson, our interim leader, for doing this and picking up the torch and really bringing an issue that's big in all of our communities.

Volunteers build a better society. They serve their neighbours, their communities, their regions, their province and their country. Service clubs, Legions and all charitable organizations raise money for such things as hospital equipment, such as an MRI, to rejuvenate cénopaths to support those valued veterans of Our Majesty's forces, and to help families afford access to lifesaving drugs. In other words, they help to fill the gaps left by government.

As the MPP for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, I hear first-hand accounts all the time about these challenges and barriers they face in regard to financial audits, taxation, regulations and declining membership. Not long after I got elected, a fellow by the name of Terry Julian from Lion's Head, Ontario, on behalf of the hospital auxiliary, came to me and raised a very similar issue. I wrote a letter to the Minister of Finance at that time and, to be honest, I got nothing of any kind of interest to pick up the torch and change this. It was similar to that letter: "There are all kinds of plans; we're going to do better." It's not enough.

We have small-town groups and organizations that are doing this. In this case, Lion's Head, a community of 500 people, and the hospital auxiliary for many, many years, raised funds for that hospital and all kinds of good initiatives across the community. They're raising \$500 because \$500 is the cap for penny tables. The OLG then warned the auxiliary volunteers to stop fundraising too much money. That means going over the \$500 raffle cap for their local hospital. It's ludicrous. The \$500 cap was set in 1970 in the days long before we had to do the type of fundraising we have to for our hospitals, and all charitable organizations out there do the same thing.

Did anyone in government, especially when we brought it to their attention, ever consider updating these regulations to promote and permit these organizations that are so valuable in our communities to continue?

Mr. Speaker, the current regulation and red tape cannot remain status quo. What is happening is that I have people coming to my office saying, "If they're going to keep putting us through this, if they're going to take away our ability to truly be helpful and take my energy and passion, then I'm going to walk away," because they're not going to go through all of this.

I congratulate Terry Julian, the auxiliary and all of the volunteers. I want to ensure that we change this regulation to allow all of our charitable sector to be able to do things in the current day to continue to support the communities that we so richly need and value.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I thank everyone for their comments.

I now recognize the member for Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank all the members who appear to be supporting this resolution and I call upon the government, if it does pass today, to please implement it. Please set up a committee so that we can begin the discussion on how we can better help service clubs.

Again, the impact of new casinos on the profits of service clubs, financial audits: The minister in his letter suggested he'd take that up with the federal government. It's also something we should deal with in the committee, though, and if we got a strong resolution from the committee to do something about it, that would help pressure the federal government, but I will take the minister up on his suggestion.

HST; the need for rebates; property taxes; selling tickets out of province and over the phone, as they used to be able to do, so they could expand their ticket sales

into bigger markets; taxes paid when holding a car raffle; charges amounting to thousands of dollars for lottery licences; costs associated with being a volunteer; the cost of insurance; the taxes they pay on the prize for those lotteries, often a car—the list goes on and on.

It's probably best summarized by Bill Roskar from the Kinsmen Club of Stayner when he noted that relaxing some of the red tape and tax implications would make his club's operations easier and result in members being able to concentrate on fundraising rather than administration. He suggests that the satisfaction of being part of a social club is being able to give back to the community, and a lessened administrative burden would help to attract more volunteers. Well said, Bill, and thank you for those comments and for filling out the questionnaire.

The fact of the matter is that there's a lot we can do. I think the best way to do it is through an all-party committee. One of the technicalities in this resolution is that the opposition doesn't control the agenda at committees, so I need the Minister of Finance, a minister over there or somebody in the government to make sure we can put this before a committee and study the issue on an all-party basis. I ask that we do that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote at the end of regular business.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (OFF-ROAD VEHICLES), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (VÉHICULES TOUT TERRAIN)

Mr. Vanthof moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of off-road vehicles / Projet de loi 46, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les véhicules tout terrain.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. John Vanthof: In the spirit of full disclosure, I'd like to tell everyone that I would personally benefit from this act, because I own a Polaris Ranger 500 side-by-side—the spirit of full disclosure.

For those who are wondering what this amendment is and actually why this act is so important and this change is so important for the people of rural Ontario, I'd like to go a little bit back in history. In 2003, legislation was passed in this House to allow ATVs to go on trails, and go on the shoulders of certain highways—not the 400 series—and secondary roads. That was passed through a lot of work. This vehicle had evolved from go-karts and from three-wheelers to a safe vehicle that had become a part of rural society.

That change, in 2003, made a huge difference to people in northern Ontario and all of rural Ontario. It made a huge change, because they had been using these

vehicles, and now they could actually use them for their work and for their leisure. A lot of people go to work on ATVs. Actually, in my neighbourhood, a lot of kids go to their part-time jobs on ATVs. There is no public transportation where I'm from. In a lot of places in rural Ontario there is no public transportation, so in many cases, the ATV is a lot cheaper than having to find a second car for your 16-year-old to go to their part-time job. It makes a huge difference.

Over the years, the ATV evolved. Like everything else, it evolved, and now, more people use UTVs than ATVs. The difference is that you can have more passengers on a UTV. An ATV can only legally have one passenger. With an ATV you have to straddle the gas tank and you have to have handlebars. A UTV usually has a bench seat and a steering wheel. It's a four-wheel-drive golf cart, for lack of a better word. It's an all-terrain golf cart. More people use these, and they basically do the same job as an ATV.

1520

The big difference is, as our population gets older—and the same thing is happening in rural Ontario as in the rest of Ontario—it's easier to use a UTV than an ATV. You don't have to straddle the gas tank; you can use a steering wheel. It's much easier to learn how to drive a UTV. The problem is, the legislation governing these vehicles hasn't evolved along with the vehicle. That's the problem.

Rural Ontarians have been pushing for a long time. My colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin has been pushing for this; my colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka has been pushing for this; my colleague from Nickel Belt—all my rural colleagues from all parties have been pushing for this. We thought we'd reached a pinnacle where we were going to be successful when the member from Glengarry-Prescott from the government side—on November 7, 2013, we all supported his resolution to change the regulations so that users of UTVs would be allowed the same regulations as the users of ATVs. A lot of people thought that we'd reached it.

Imagine our surprise when here we're now in 2015 and nothing has changed, despite—

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wasn't surprised.

Mr. John Vanthof: But imagine the surprise from people who still actually had faith in the government at that time.

This isn't costly; this isn't groundbreaking; this is basically a recognition of the needs of the people of rural Ontario. That's what this is.

After we did all kinds of petitions and letters—I would like to read the response from the then Minister of Transportation after his party passed this motion. This is from Glen Murray, who was, at that time, the Minister of Transportation:

"I followed the debate on MPP Grant Crack's (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell) motion and understand that members of the Legislative Assembly, various municipalities and ORV users feel very strongly about increasing the on-road access for various ORV types. The

ministry is aware of some of the additional safety features of other ORV types compared to single-rider ATVs, but I would be interested in hearing about how to mitigate our safety concerns as these vehicles are designed for off-road environments, not highways."

Well, to the minister of the time, so are ATVs. ATVs are designed for off-road environments, not highways, yet they are permitted under the act. If anyone is going to tell you that an ATV is safer than a UTV, they're wrong. A UTV has roll bars; a UTV has seat belts.

I've got a couple of letters here. I really like this one. It explains, in plain, common English. Someone from my riding:

"Dear John Vanthof, MPP Timiskaming-Cochrane:

"My wife and I are excited about the proposed changes to regulation 316/03 allowing side-by-sides and two-up ATVs the same privileges as regular ATVs. We have been riding ATVs since 2007"—actually, they're not from my riding—"and are members of the Haliburton ATV Association. Three years ago, my wife cut her finger ... and severed a tendon. She had three unsuccessful surgeries to repair her finger, and unfortunately she wore a cast on her arm for about a year and a half, on and off. Wearing a cast made it impossible for her to ride" her ATV "until one day she had an opportunity to ride as a passenger in a side-by-side. We were so impressed with how safe this vehicle is. It has a full roll cage, seat belts and mirrors. My wife was perfectly safe, even wearing a cast. Two weeks later, we traded in her ATV for a new side-by-side, and we are having a ball. A pregnant woman could safely ride in one of these vehicles. We have seen families with young children riding in these buggies just enjoying the great outdoors with the rest of us.

"John, ATVing is a great recreational way to spend time with family and friends, and side-by-side or two-up ATVs should be included so more people can ride together and have fun. I really hope this ... passes for the betterment of the sport.

"Thank you for your time,

"John Vonk."

The problem is that these people were breaking the law. When people are forced to break the law for no real reason, that points to the law needing to be changed or updated. It's a big problem. What's most frustrating about this issue is that this could have been changed. The government is in full power. I would like to have my name on a bill saying that this passed, but what I would like a lot more is for the government, in the next month, to say, "You know what? We're going to change this regulation." My folks who use UTVs and rural people across—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And people in Glen Murray's riding.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm sure a few people in Glen Murray's riding use UTVs. So the people in rural Ontario, when the snow goes, or even when the snow is still here, can actually use UTVs where they are using them now illegally. That needs to be done.

Something I've heard a couple of times—I'd like to close with this—is that we have to be careful, because when we allow these machines we're going to have all kinds of new traffic problems. Well, ATVs have been legal for longer than a decade, and by and large the users have been responsible. People across rural Ontario have been very responsible. They've taken the privilege of using ATVs on roads very seriously. These same people are now asking for the right to use UTVs, and there is no reason to believe that they would take this right any less seriously.

This case is strictly about respecting the needs of the people of rural Ontario. I get more calls and more petitions, as do my colleagues, on this issue than on almost any other issue.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'll give you an example, okay? We have lots of snow in northern Ontario, right?

Interjections: Yes.

Mr. John Vanthof: So, in my riding—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I didn't know that.

Mr. John Vanthof: Give me a second. In my riding, someone put a blade on the front of the UTV to clean snow. Everyone has these, okay? He was charged. You cannot use a UTV on a street, so technically cleaning snow out of your laneway and backing onto the street is illegal. You can do it with an ATV; you can do it with a tractor; you can do it with a four-wheel-drive pickup; but lo, you can't do it with a UTV. Now, by far the majority of police officers are very understanding and look the other way.

Interjection: They have to.

Mr. John Vanthof: Right? But, at the end of the day, if something goes wrong, you are breaking the law. It's time that that changes. This government has the full power to act. They could do it. They may not be able to do it this afternoon, but they could do it on Monday. We need to change it, so that law-respecting, law-abiding people in rural Ontario can use these things without being forced to break the law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I want to thank the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane for his passionate remarks on Bill 46. I'm really pleased to be able to speak to this bill today, and I hope that, when I hopefully someday come through your riding, you'll be able to take me out for a ride on that.

Interjection.

1530

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'll hold you to that. Okay.

As the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation, I am particularly interested to hear what all members have to say regarding this topic. There has been a lot of interest in this topic of late. I know that at least right now, there are three private members' bills tabled relating to off-road vehicle use.

This is not a surprising fact when you take a good, close look at the figures. In 2013, there were 407,585 off-

road vehicles registered in Ontario. According to the Canadian Off-Highway Vehicle Distributors Council, over 11,000 of these were new ATVs that were sold in Ontario just in 2013 alone.

Every year, more and more people seem to be buying and using these types of vehicles all across the province. It's important that we balance this increase in usage with road safety.

I know I've said this a number of times in this House, but I really do believe that our government is truly proud of our record of having amongst the safest roads in North America. But we also know that there is more that we can do to improve road safety.

As always, keeping our roads safe is the highest priority for our government. That's why our government has taken a number of concrete actions to keep both drivers and ORV riders safe. MTO staff continue to work closely with more than 150 road safety partners to develop and implement public education initiatives at the community, regional and the provincial level. These partners include police agencies, injury prevention practitioners, ORV clubs and trail organizations from around the province. MTO staff and these partners attend annual trade shows, make public presentations, develop and distribute public education material, create community displays and deliver interactive programs to young riders in partnership with local secondary and elementary schools.

I'm particularly proud to say that a large component of these initiatives is promoting young rider safety. My son Alex, at age 12, decided at his first ride that he would shoot across a farmer's field with his friend in a side-by-side vehicle, and they immediately crashed. He has learned, during his first lesson, that having a road safety tip or two before he gets on a vehicle is an essential thing. He was unhurt.

It's well known that by educating youth on road safety early on, we can ensure that it becomes a habit for them as they become adults. Ontario's second annual ATV Safety Week will take this place this year, in May 2015. MTO has actually launched four ATV safety videos to assist the public in learning how to safely operate their ORV. An online knowledge assessment tool has also been produced to allow riders to test their safety IQ.

All of these initiatives work in tandem with Ontario's first Smart Ride Safe Ride ATV guide, which was created and launched in 2011 to educate riders on the legislative requirements for both on-road and off-road use, and to promote safe and responsible riding practices. The guide is already available on the MTO website.

Many members of this House have already spoken in favour and contributed to the debate on Bill 31, the Making Ontario's Roads Safer act. This bill not only serves to protect drivers on our roads; it also introduces a number of provisions that will keep pedestrians and cyclists safe in Ontario. I'm really pleased about the support that I've heard on all sides of this House for Bill 31.

If passed, it will also remove a legislated equipment requirement for ORV tire pressure that may affect the

ability of municipalities to pass future bylaws. The bill, if passed, will eliminate the prescriptive definition of low-pressure-bearing tires that could affect the future off-road bylaw authority of the municipalities.

With all of this in mind, I want to discuss more specifically Bill 46.

Bill 46 seeks to establish a requirement that regulations passed cannot restrict an ORV from being driven on a highway if it's designed to carry more than one passenger and where there's more than just a driver on the vehicle.

Currently, single-rider ATVs are permitted limited on-road access to slightly under 7,700 kilometres of provincial highways. All ORVs, including ATVs, in Ontario can directly cross a public road where permitted.

Ontario also allows single-rider ATVs the opportunity to travel along permitted provincial highways. Municipalities have the authority to determine whether or not single-rider ATVs should be allowed to access roads under their jurisdiction.

There are, understandably, safety concerns related to using ORVs, as there are when anyone attempts to drive any kind of vehicle.

MTO has identified some safety concerns with extending on-road access to all types of ORVs. However, we also recognize the importance of balancing these safety concerns with the potential economic, tourism and enhanced mobility benefits associated with the increased use of off-road vehicles.

That's why, at the direction of the Minister of Transportation, MTO has already been conducting extensive consultations on ORV use. In fact, our most recent consultation in mid-January saw MTO staff joined by almost 30 different stakeholder groups representing enforcement, municipalities, public health, industry, agricultural groups and trail organizations. I was there for that. A lot of the comments were very, very positive.

Based on the consultations, it's clear that stakeholders want government to be an active partner in the development of a modern ORV regulatory framework. That's why our government will continue to take positive steps forward on this issue. We'll continue to work with our municipal and road safety partners, as well as our industry and stakeholder partners, to ensure that we develop strong solutions for outstanding ORV-related issues, including extending on-road access for things like two-up ATVs, side-by-side ATVs and UTVs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 46, which is An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of off-road vehicles. It has a similar objective to a private member's bill which I'll be debating at this time next week, which is Bill 58, but it has a different approach. This bill would restrict permission to drive an off-road vehicle on a highway to vehicles that are designed to carry only a driver and no passengers.

Just a little bit of history, as was mentioned by the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane: Back in 2003, the

Highway Traffic Act was amended to allow ATVs on some designated provincial highways and to allow municipalities to decide if they want to allow ATVs on any of their roads or some of their roads. The definition of an ATV is very specific: It's one-person; you straddle it; it has four wheels. Since that time, we've seen all kinds of different vehicles developed. Typically, they're called UTVs: utility task vehicles.

As the member mentioned, he has a Polaris Ranger, which is a very popular UTV. It has a bench seat that three people can sit on. It has a pickup box in the back, so it's, as he mentioned, probably safer than an ATV. It's probably more popular with people who want to work with the ATV, because it can carry firewood. A senior who might have trouble using an ATV probably feels more comfortable on a UTV.

The way the rules are now, if you live in rural Parry Sound-Muskoka, say in one of the rural municipalities, even if the municipality has decided that they're fine with allowing ATVs on their roads—and these, in most cases, are dirt roads not very highly travelled. Say a resident owns a woodlot a kilometre down the road and wants to use his Polaris Ranger to access that woodlot; it's technically against the law. They're breaking the law to go a kilometre down the road to get on their woodlot to be able to cut some firewood. I've certainly heard from residents of Parry Sound-Muskoka who would like to see that changed, and it's something that I absolutely support.

The member mentioned something I hadn't thought of. I have a Kubota RTV with a blade in the front that I plow my driveway with, out in rural Bracebridge, about half an hour from the closest town, on a small dirt road where you don't see much traffic. As he pointed out, it's technically illegal for me to back on to the road to plow the opening to the driveway, something I hadn't thought of, which brings up another grey area, where you have a vehicle like a Kubota RTV, which is really tractor-based, and it could be considered an instrument of husbandry and have a slow-moving-vehicle sign on it, and may be legal, depending on the interpretation of the officer.

1540

I know we have two other members who would like to speak to this. I would simply say that in the intercession I went around to quite a few municipalities, particularly in the Parry Sound district—the more rural ones—and they're in favour of updating the rules. I've heard from lots of people who are in favour of updating the rules. We had a motion passed by the House last year.

My experience in Quebec is that they're generally way ahead of us on trails policy. They actually plow trails for ATVs in the wintertime. I'm not sure how much sense that makes, but they do that—I've witnessed that. They allow UTVs in their small towns. You can drive down to the restaurant, and I've seen that. But they also seem to be ahead of us on cycling trails. They have the Route Verte and the transprovincial trails.

I'm going to stop now, because we have two other members. I'd just say that I am supportive of this, and I

look forward to speaking further next week as well to my own private member's bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I am rising, of course, to support the legislation that was tabled by the member for Timiskaming—Cochrane.

This is an issue that I think all members of this House have agreed needs to be dealt with. It is something that rural Ontarians have been talking about for some time. People around here say they have been listening to the voices of rural Ontarians. The problem is, they don't act on the voices of rural Ontarians.

Next week, in fact, the Rural Ontario Municipal Association and the Ontario Good Roads Association are meeting here in Toronto. They're coming from all across Ontario to talk about rural issues and rural concerns. We know that this issue has come up every time those folks have talked to us for the last several years, and yet here we are with a government that continues to drag its feet on this particular change.

A UTV is pretty much the type of vehicle that is utilized by all kinds of folks in northern Ontario and rural Ontario. In fact, I had the opportunity myself, through the good graces of the MPP from Timiskaming—Cochrane, to drive a UTV. It was something that was necessary for me to be able to undertake a particular task that needed to be undertaken when I was in rural Ontario. For me, I see this as no big deal whatsoever. There is lots of foot-dragging, lots of barriers being put up, but no real action on something that's quite easy to address.

I want to thank the member for bringing this up yet again here in the House. I would hope it gets not only the support it had from every party the last time it was here, but that it gets support from the government and the government actually moves on it.

I remember when the current Premier decided she was going to be the critic for agriculture and rural affairs—the minister, rather, not the critic; the minister for agriculture and rural affairs. I thought it was oh-so-cute when she donned her little red boots in the photo op, because she was now going to be the minister of agriculture and rural affairs. Well, Speaker, I think it's time that that Premier dusted off those little red boots and kicked some butt over on the other side so that this piece of legislation can be passed and we can finally deal with the anomaly that exists here, where UTVs are not allowed to be used and utilized in the same way as ATVs are in this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I also want to commend my friend from Timiskaming—Cochrane. This is a very equitable bill, and I appreciate your bringing it forward.

I've said many times in this House that I've always believed this place is overly partisan. I always try to get my House duty on Thursday afternoon, because it's that one time we can be MPPs first and work on things that I think are of concern to all Ontarians.

If you look at the history of this very fine place, back to the days of Agnes Macphail and Robert Baldwin, this place used to have a very different character—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —and there was a time when you could actually make a speech without a party leader interrupting you. But I want to go back, because this is an important issue.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You'll notice I sat quietly and listened when you guys were speaking this afternoon. I have a non-interference rule, because God knows we do that to each other. It's a good thing.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a good thing.

The member, right now, sits beside the member from Parkdale—High Park. We worked together very well on things like the one-metre rule for cyclists. We've worked very well with the member for Parry Sound—Muskoka. Those things are now working their way through the House, right? We all understand, because we all share responsibility—when we use words like “foot-dragging,” we should be careful how we do that.

When we did that road user safety bill that's now before the House again—I think it has got five private members' bills in it, if I remember correctly. Only one of them is from the government side. Right now, as environment minister, I'm going through all of the private members' bills that have been tabled by all members of this House. I've started meeting with some of you one-on-one—the same thing I did when I was transportation minister—to bring these things forward. As I said privately—and I won't repeat it, because there are some issues with doing this exactly now. There are some environmental concerns; there are some safety concerns.

When I was transportation minister, I held a series of round tables at ROMA and AMO. We had, I think, about 17 municipalities, both rural and urban, participating in that. Some of them are looking for some things that have some complexity to them.

Not only will I vote for this today—because this is the third bill like this—because I think it's fundamentally right, but I also went over and talked to the member one-on-one. I am very happy to work with you and the Minister of Transportation to sort that out.

We do have some other overarching issues that I know are of concern to the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane and his colleagues. One of them is climate change. We're rapidly heading for four degrees Celsius. We've had some discussions with members opposite. You look at what happened in the UK or New Zealand or Norway, where they decided that climate change, as an issue, was too important to be a partisan issue and they started working at that.

We did this on cycling. We've done this on a number of issues. I'm quite sincerely offering to support that. Maybe we can work together to work out some of the environmental concerns, some of the municipal concerns and some of the safety concerns.

I want to say that we're working right now—I think, again, it's another thing we agree on, your seatmate from Parkdale–High Park and the member from Toronto–Danforth—we worked on electrification. We celebrate now that we're now moving, over the next decade, to completely electrify all of the GO system. That's now under way. That plan is being staged. That's very, very exciting, I think. It's not just Union Pearson Express now; it's the whole thing. That's also now moving forward in this budget.

I always think we treat each other as intelligent people and we try to work on these things together. Those are not things that happen in months. Have we been working hard on this? Yes. Is there a reason that the law hasn't been changed instantaneously? It's because there are still some substantive issues that have to be worked out, and I think, working together, we can do that.

As my Jewish friends say, mazel tov—a good thing. I plan on voting for this today. I hope we can try and improve the environmental performance of some of these vehicles.

I just want to say one last thing, Mr. Speaker. This is not a rural or urban thing. Do you know how many people who live in my constituency actually drive ATVs and snowmobiles and have cottages? I lived in Alexandria on a dairy farm. I couldn't get around. These aren't recreational vehicles. For a lot of folks, these are vehicles. You can imagine living in Manitoba, with all that flat land.

The leader of the third party—I give her credit for riding in an ATV. Sometimes you have to do it, but it's darned fun to go fast. There's something about it. I feel like I'm an eight-year-old kid, like when you played Hot Wheels and you sent them zipping. You actually get to drive one of these things. It's kick-ass fun, Mr. Speaker, and there's nothing wrong with having kick-ass fun times. It's important.

Let's work together on this. Good leadership. Thank you very much to my friend across the way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'll start off by saying I'm going to support my good friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane on this, and also my colleague Norm Miller from Parry Sound–Muskoka, who will be bringing out a similar bill next week which will have pertinent and normal information that we want to pass and get on with this.

I want to start off—the parliamentary assistant said she'd like to be able to go up and take a ride with the member at some point. I think maybe if she'd do this right away and we'd get charged by the OPP, this might become a priority of the government on the opposite side to actually change and see how ludicrous it is.

Just before the former minister leaves—I think it's interesting to know that he talks about working together, but it was him that didn't get this done when it was passed. Back in 2013, motion 48 was put forward by the good member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and had the right intention. Regrettably, that Minister of Trans-

portation ignored it and didn't get it passed. Now, today, he's saying it's a wonderful thing and we should have passed it at some point. Why isn't it there? The rubber needs to hit the road.

1550

Here we are debating something that this government should have done, could have done and we wouldn't even be talking about it. It's ludicrous that people in areas—like in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, we have lots of farmers, hunters, fishermen, people from the city who come up for tourism purposes to do this and they may need to go on to the road to get to their bushlot. They may need to use it to get to a farm from another piece of property. It's unbelievable that we're playing games with stuff like this at the end of the day.

We have people who ride two-up ATVs, side-by-side UTVs and, as I said, many people coming from the more urban areas, who come to an area like the beautiful Bruce Peninsula to be able to ride their ATVs, to be able to clear snow like we've heard today—a safety issue for emergency personnel to get in and they're going to get charged because they back up onto a gravel road. How ludicrous is it that we actually play these types of games?

At the end of the day, we have to stop putting motions forward and putting bills forward that we say we're going to pass and then we find ways to drag our feet and not make it happen. I'm hopeful that this government will be sincere and truly look at the safety perspective, look at what the impingement of this is on people's rights.

At the end of the day, if you can ride an ATV, why can't you ride a UTV in the areas where there are needs to get to other properties, where you have to cross a road, travel on a road to get to a trail, to get to that recreational opportunity? We need to be able to do that.

This is about families. Don Calvert, a paraplegic father from Sault Ste. Marie, and his daughter, Brittany, are one such family that's looking forward to the day when this Liberal government will make it legal for them to just turn on their side-by-side and head to the trails. I certainly hope the new minister will be mindful of his duty to protect all road users, including those people such as the Calverts.

Mr. Speaker, it's pretty simple. We have an ability here to change something that we all agree is wrong. Let's expedite it. Let's move it through the House and make something of value for the people of Ontario and maximize our time here to get on to the other issues that we need to be speaking about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mme France Gélinas: I will add a few minutes to the debate. I can tell you that in my riding, ATV trails are really a source of tourism. We have some beautiful trails in Nickel Belt. I encourage you to come and visit Nickel Belt. You can rent a UTV right there. They will show you how to drive it. It's easy. You will go to places in the bush that you will never have had the opportunity to see before. Especially when the ground is frozen, you can go over mush. You can go over all sorts of places and see

the beauty of what northern Ontario looks like. In the summer, the fall, the winter or the spring, it makes no difference. Those vehicles have really opened up tourism opportunities, and we are doing good.

I must say, though, that the ATVs, the first of those that came out, were not that safe. They were meant for one person, but you could buy a seat to make it a two-person, which a lot of people did. There had been quite a few accidents, unfortunately, because they were made for one person, but two would ride on it and bad things have happened. But with the UTV, they are so much safer. They are easy to drive. You don't need any strength. You don't need any special anything. You just need to see where you're going and away you go. They don't go that fast. In the bush, they will climb anything.

So why don't we do this? Why do we keep saying you have to keep using the more dangerous vehicle if you want to be able to do something as simple as cross the road, because when you go through the bush, every now and again you will come to a road, and if you cross the road, you are breaking the law? If you're on an ATV, you're not breaking the law; if you're on a UTV, you are breaking the law—not obvious.

Why don't we change this so that those vehicles don't break the law? Will there be restrictions on them? Absolutely. I don't want them on the 401. That would make no sense whatsoever, but on Regional Road 55 in Walden, absolutely. There's no question that they would be welcome.

For tourism reasons, for safety reasons, let's pass this—the sooner the better.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today—

Applause.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —and to receive a round of applause from the government side—on the issue of amending the Highway Traffic Act for off-road vehicles. It has been a huge topic in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I know that the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has brought it up before, and members from the government side have brought it up before. Basically we're saying that it's time to modernize the Highway Traffic Act so that these vehicles, whether they be called just off-road vehicles or utility, task and all-terrain vehicles—as you said, people have been fined for plowing.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane has done a great job of this with the examples he gave of someone plowing out their driveway, backing out into a highway and being fined. That's absolutely ridiculous. It's something that has taken several years, and we've advocated on so many occasions in the Legislature. Now all three parties sound supportive.

Just the fact that more and more people are using these, whether it be farmers or people on their way to work—you can use them up in our neck of the woods, as

I can say. Hunters, riders, accessing recreational purposes—I am the critic for tourism, culture and sport, and we need it for tourism.

Interjection: It's huge for tourism.

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a huge tourism catch.

Argos, I know, are made in my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga's riding. They won many, many awards. They're hardly legal to be used. They're a very good Canadian company, and we're very proud of that and the jobs they produce, so it is definitely overdue.

It's a regulation change. I know that the Minister of Transportation spoke in favour of it—well, the former Minister of Transportation, now the minister of climate change. He spoke to supporting it, but when he was the Minister of Transportation we would have given him praise for bringing that in. It was something that we all agree on. I think it's time when the example has been brought up that the province of Quebec has already allowed this to take place. Then we get into vying for tourists, people who are hunters, or anything that they can use these vehicles for legally in Quebec that we cannot here.

I know that my colleague the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka is going to debate a similar bill next week here in the Legislature, maybe with a different angle as to how to get to the end result, but we're all in agreement. We're all on the same side today.

Interjection: They both benefit.

Ms. Laurie Scott: They both benefit. I say that this would be extremely helpful. I know that I have ATV associations up in Haliburton and Kawartha Lakes that have both been very vocal on seeing this go through. I'm just trying to find their names here—I might be able to in a second—but they have been promoting this use. They have been getting petitions signed. I would hazard to say that those who use the off-roads have all broken a few laws the way they stand, and we're in the good graces of the OPP and the municipal police forces, that just turn the other cheek so that they are not compromised for an outdated law that exists. An update would help and benefit all of us.

Mr. Bill Walker: The Bruce and Grey ATV clubs really want this.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes. The Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound ATV clubs mentioned by my colleague behind me are fully supportive of it; obviously all ATV clubs are. I don't have a current statistic, but at one point all-terrain vehicles were outselling snowmobiles five to one. I think that's just a reality of the times in which we live, and they are allowed to come onto some of our roads in some of our municipalities—not all. It has enhanced the tourism dollars, the adventures that can take place up in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

So, all parties being in agreement today, if we could put a due date for the government to act on this, it doesn't even have to be debated anymore—after next week, of course, for the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka, but it's just a regulation change. I commend the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for bringing this forward

again. Let's see how many times we can strike it lucky. I hope today is your day, that we'll pass it, but let's see if it gets into law. Thank you for bringing that forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Michael Mantha: As critic for northern development, mines and transportation for our party, it is with great pleasure and honour that I add my comments to this debate. I always stand wholeheartedly to speak on behalf of individuals across Algoma-Manitoulin. The one city, 37 municipalities, 15 unorganized areas and 24 First Nations that are there are all asking for this bill. It is so important to the area, and I speak about this—

Interjections.

1600

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I get a little bit of order, please?

Mr. Michael Mantha: —from a perspective of tourism, I speak of this in regard to economic development and I speak about this wholeheartedly from small-town recreation and family activity that will really bring people and communities together.

You have to understand that these trails, these roadways, are arteries across northern Ontario—actually, quite frankly, across this province—arteries. They're the bloodline. When these individuals travel—and at one time they were on their ATVs and you would have groups of anywhere between 20 people to 25 people on their ATVs. That means hotel rooms; that means gasoline; that means gift shops—that means people spending money in your community. That's what we need across northern Ontario right at this time, because it is difficult to attract people up there.

But here's the gift that this could do—here in the greater Toronto area you're blessed with having beautiful museums, beautiful recreation facilities. You have the Rogers Centre, you have movie theatres, you have Canada's Wonderland. Do you want to know what our Wonderland is? It's our parks; it's our woods; it's our forests; it's our trails; it's our lakes. That's what we have.

When you have individuals who are being restricted as far as accessing these areas, that's a problem in itself, but accessing them legally is also a big problem for individuals across northern Ontario. This will change that. You have individuals who have got to an age in their life where they physically cannot drive the ATV. Thank goodness we have the UTVs now so that many grandpas and grandmas can actually jump in their vehicles, bring their grandchildren with them and have an activity they can all go out and enjoy. It is such a pleasant family event that people can go out and have a beautiful and wonderful day doing.

What I do want to tell you is that the police officers, particularly in my area, are very lenient with individuals. Although they make sure that the people are abiding by the laws, they make sure that if they observe a violation, they actually follow that individual home. Here's the kicker, Mr. Speaker: They'll follow that individual home, they'll get to his driveway, they will get out of their

vehicle, they will walk up to this individual and they will inform him that he has broken the law. Most of these individuals are basically saying, "Well, why? What did I do?" So the explanation goes out.

Do you want to know what they're saying? The police officers of this province know that we are trying to solve this problem. They're telling them, "I want you to go tell your MPP, I want to you go tell Michael Mantha, that I came to your driveway today, observed you, watching at your home, so that they know that we know that this needs to be corrected."

We talked about this extensively, under Bill 31, with the Minister of Transportation. I was quite pleased to hear that there's a particular part under Bill 31 that is a cleanup that addresses the issue in regard to the pressure that is within the tires, which is apparently going to lay the path in order to change the regulations to get this done.

Let's get it done. This is a no-brainer bill. This is not a difficult task. The minister can do this. It's a regulation change. We should look at doing it as quickly as possible. I appreciate the consultation that has gone on, which the member from Cambridge alluded to earlier. She keeps saying, "We're taking steps forward." Heck, let's take a leap. Let's get this done. It should have been done a long time ago. Let's get it resolved, because it's that important to communities across northern Ontario.

Again, I say that the tourism industry is a very fragile one in northern Ontario. This is something where people can actually help with their communities, create jobs and improve economic development. That, Mr. Speaker, is a very important issue across this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M. Gilles Bisson: Monsieur le Président, j'ai écouté attentivement le débat, puis je pense que c'est clair que la plupart des députés dans l'Assemblée sont d'accord avec ce projet de loi. Ils disent, « Écoute, la situation est telle que ça n'a plus de bon sens. » La loi courante ne reflète pas les réalités de la situation avec ces véhicules.

Moi, je le sais. Quand je parle au monde dans mon comté, à Hearst ou à Kap ou à Timmins, c'est toujours le même. Ils se disent : « Écoute, j'ai mon ATV. Je peux aller n'importe où avec. Mais quand ça vient à mon side-by-side — c'est comme ça qu'on parle en français : « ATV », « side-by-side ». Ils se disent : « Ça ne fait pas de bon sens parce que le side-by-side est beaucoup plus sûr qu'un ATV et aussi beaucoup plus pratique. » Il y a bien de monde qui s'en sert pour charrier un peu de bois, qui met une pelle en avant pour nettoyer la neige, ou qui se transportent d'un point à l'autre quand ça vient à la chasse ou la pêche sur les chemins au nord de l'Ontario.

Donc, je suis content que ça a l'air de la majorité ou même peut-être l'unanimité de la Chambre, les députés. Si c'est le cas, je demanderais, comme M. Vanthof l'a demandé, que le gouvernement fasse ça vite. Écoute, ce n'est pas une question d'avoir besoin d'étudier la question pour bien longtemps. C'est une question que le gouvernement peut changer un règlement et être capable

de changer l'autorité nécessaire pour accéder aux demandes de M. Vanthof.

De la part de tous les citoyens de mon comté, on veut le remercier pour avoir amené ce projet de loi devant nous.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane. You have two minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank all my honourable colleagues who spoke on behalf of this issue. I heard lots of agreement.

There was one interesting comment about how this has an environmental connotation. I have the, I guess, opportunity of living right next to the Quebec border. If someone in Virginiatown on my side of the border, on the Ontario side of the border, wants to go hunting with his UTV, he needs to go over half a mile of highway. To be legal, he has to pull out his truck, hook up his trailer, put the UTV on the trailer, move the truck a mile, start and stop, while the guy on the Quebec side starts his ATV and drives. Now, which is more environmentally friendly? I'd say: the people on the Quebec side. If you really want to talk about environment, that's more environmentally friendly.

But the issue, again, and I don't think I can reinforce this enough: We can't be standing here year after year saying something's a problem and we could easily fix it, and not do it. And study it. And say, "We have to look at safety." Well, Quebec has already looked at the safety concerns. They're doing it. This is an issue about respect for the tools that people in rural Ontario need.

Here we're talking about electrifying trains. In Timiskaming–Cochrane they just announced they're closing the bus stations in Matheson and Englehart. If we're not careful, UTVs will be the only thing we have left. In rural Ontario, we're sick of listening to people talk about our concerns and then turning around and ignoring them. You want to show that you have concern for rural Ontario? The things that can be fixed easily without a massive amount of study should be fixed, and fixing the UTV situation is one of them. A majority government could do it now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

PROTECTING INTERNS AND CREATING A LEARNING ECONOMY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA PROTECTION DES STAGIAIRES ET LA CRÉATION D'UNE ÉCONOMIE D'APPRENTISSAGE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 25, standing in the name of Ms. Sattler.

Ms. Sattler has moved second reading of Bill 64, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), Ms. Sattler?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Legislative Assembly, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to Legislative Assembly. Agreed? Agreed. So referred.

SERVICE CLUBS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Wilson has moved private member's notice of motion number 16.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (OFF-ROAD VEHICLES), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (VÉHICULES TOUT TERRAIN)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Vanthof has moved second reading of Bill 46, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of off-road vehicles.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

1610

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j)—Mr. Vanthof?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to refer to general government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to general government. Agreed? Agreed. So moved.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RÉGIME DE RETRAITE DE LA PROVINCE DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 18, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan / Projet de loi 56, Loi exigeant l'établissement du Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): When this item of business was last debated, the member for Nipissing had the floor with time remaining on the clock.

Further debate.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm happy to get up and speak about Bill 56, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act. I'm happy to speak about it.

We have a retirement savings crisis in this province. We have a lack-of-a-defined-benefit-pension-plan problem in this province as well. This isn't news, and it's certainly not good news.

As early as the 1990s, we had a lot of good-paying jobs in this province, but we saw, since the early and mid-1990s, those jobs start to dwindle away. Many of those jobs had pension plans, pensions that actually could support families in this province.

Because many of those jobs have now become precarious work, temporary work, contract work, people cannot afford to contribute money to RRSPs. They can hardly afford to live because of the kinds of jobs that are available to many Ontarians today.

So although I support this bill in principle, I look forward to a time that we can see how we can actually strengthen the bill and improve it and make sure that, when it moves through the legislative process, it has everything that it needs to make sure that Ontario's seniors have the protections they need when they retire. I would be remiss if I did not note that this ORPP legislation largely mirrors the Ontario retirement plan that the NDP proposed early in 2010.

As we all know, Ontarians do not have workplace pensions—many of them. Two thirds of them, in fact, do not have a workplace pension. As the New Democrat for community and social services, I can't help but be reminded on a daily basis, with the emails I receive, the phone calls I receive from all over the province—seniors who have faced too many obstacles day in and day out to even allow them to contribute to a pension plan during their working years.

Just yesterday I received a phone call, actually, from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo's riding, from a man by the name of Paul. He called in to talk about this legislation. I happened to answer the phone and have a lengthy discussion with him. A man who was injured in an accident, currently he is on ODSP. He survives on seven credit cards a month. The bank sends you credit cards every month, and all you've got to do is sign on the dotted line, and you've got that \$500 or \$1,000 initial credit card—

Mr. Michael Mantha: They don't dare send me any.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I know they won't send you any.

Anyway, he lives on his credit cards. He robs Peter to pay Paul at the end of each month. He's wondering what the Liberal government—what we're actually going to do for people on ODSP who live in poverty day in and day out. He had a great idea. He said that the government talks about getting people on ODSP back into the workforce, and perhaps they should be looking at providing some training and offering government jobs that are

vacant to people on ODSP. There are lots of government jobs in this province, and as they become vacant, that would be a way to get people who maybe have some physical restrictions back into the workplace. But he said the answer that he actually got when he called the Premier's office and talked to the Premier's staff was, "The government can't afford to give you people on ODSP any more money. We're moving forward with this pension plan for people who are in the workforce." But Paul said to me, "Well, that won't help me." He wanted me to talk about that today when I stood up here.

As such, I can't help but look at the actual act from this lens and ensure that whatever we do serves the interests of all Ontarians, including those who are often left on the margins and who most need the help. As we know, there are too many Ontarians with insufficient workplace pensions struggling to make ends meet. It's up to us, the members in this House, the legislators, to ensure that we have a progressive defined benefit public pension plan that ensures our seniors can retire with dignity. The only way to do that is with a defined benefit plan.

We have the opportunity here to build something that will serve and protect all workers at all stages of their careers, be it young people entering the workforce, mid-career professionals or those nearing retirement.

Some of my fellow colleagues spoke yesterday. Certainly our pension critic from Oshawa, Ms. French, spoke quite well on the subject of ORPPs and PRPPs, and I just wanted to add a few comments to what we heard yesterday. We know that there are going to be three pieces of legislation and this is the first. The second bill will be responsible for administration and management, and the third will deal with all of the details.

I think my message here today, Speaker, is: Let's make sure we actually get those details worked out and make sure we hear from all the stakeholders, from all the people who have something to say about this, before we actually put in legislation that can negatively impact people in the province.

The ORPP is supposed to be phased in by January 1, 2017, and essentially ensures that the employer and employees would contribute a percentage—1.9% each, I believe—to this plan, to a maximum income level of \$90,000. But the bill doesn't say what the minimum income level is going to be, and that is problematic because, in my view, those are the people who are going to need that pension more than people at the top end of the scale. I think that needs to be defined sooner rather than later.

These are the people who, because they're earning lower wages, have never had the opportunity to invest in an RRSP or put away any savings. For those employees who earn less than \$70,000 in annual income, the ORPP will end up being less of a benefit than CPP. It only becomes comparable for those high-wage income earners, Speaker, and that hardly seems fair to me. It would also certainly be significantly less in benefits provided by public sector defined benefit pension plans and the broader public sector plans as well.

The bill stipulates that ORPP benefits would not be eligible to those who have a comparable defined benefit plan. If so, what defines comparable plans, and will defined contribution plans and pooled registered pension plans be included in that definition? I don't think that is entirely clear yet. I believe there is some lobby to certainly try to exclude on one side and perhaps include on the other side.

Almost half of all Ontario workers are in some form of comparable plan if you include the pooled registered pension plans and mandatory and volunteer RRSP contributions that many workplaces still have. How would this affect them? Would they be better off with an ORPP, or would they be forced to make double contributions?

The point came to mind today that I don't think I have heard in any of the debate yet: What about spousal contributions? Is there going to be a spousal contribution in this ORPP? Certainly, under defined benefit plans, there is a spousal contribution and, depending on the plan, you can sign off for a lower amount of benefits, for 100% benefit left to your spouse or 60% or 80%, depending on the plan. I can tell you, Speaker, that coming from a steel town where many factory jobs have closed, in the private sector pension plans, workers were able to sign their spouses off of their pension plans so they would get a greater amount of pension at the end of the day. But guess what, Speaker? Many of them dropped dead within a year of retiring, and all of those pooled pension monies stayed in the pool, and the spouses ended up living in poverty for the rest of their lives. I see those people in my office every day, and I still see the erosion of those pension plans happening in the steel industry in particular. So that is problematic.

1620

The other issue that came to my mind was, what will happen if people go into the PRPP and they have, I don't know, \$10,000 in that pooled plan? Are they going to be allowed to convert that and take that into the ORPP? It seems to me they could buy back some of their years of service in their workplace by doing that. That certainly happens in the defined benefit plans today. You can be in the HOOPP plan, you can go over and work in a workplace that has OMERS, and you can actually transfer those OMERS dollars to HOOPP and vice versa. I think there needs to be some consideration that if people are going to go into these pooled RPPs to start with, there needs to be some guarantee that they're going to be able to move those dollars into a defined benefit system at the end of the day.

I want to tell you one little story, and it's actually a personal story about my spouse. He was in the OMERS plan for a number of years, and then he was out on a leave of absence in another job where they made 10% contributions to an RRSP for him. At the end of the day, the benefit amount when he retired was probably about the same as he would have had through OMERS. But guess what? There was no spousal benefit left. So when he's gone, that benefit is gone. That's one more reason to have a defined benefit plan with a spousal benefit.

I also wanted to talk about what happens when you change pension plans. This actually happened under the Mike Harris government. You'll remember that home care back in the 1990s was administered, through the Minister of Health, by municipalities. All of those health care professionals, IT people and clerical workers had their pension in OMERS. When the Conservative government introduced the CCACs as a way of improving the system, reducing dollars, they then became covered under HOOPP. So they now have two side-by-side pension plans. That resulted in a class action lawsuit that took many, many years, and just in the last few years did it get settled. There was no decision from the court; the parties settled. At the end of the day, there are many health care workers through that system who have a much lower pension on retirement—some have quoted me as much as \$500 a month—because they were not able to combine those two pension plans. The settlement was a measly \$5,000 per employee. If you, as a nurse, for example, were out \$500 because of your years of service and your years of contributions—if you live eight years past your retirement, you're out up to \$500 a month for the rest of your life. That can be significant dollars. It could run into \$100,000, if you live to a ripe old age like my mother of soon-to-be 90.

So there are lots of things to consider when we're talking about these pension issues.

How are we going to address the portability piece from the pooled investments or from other pension plans? We know that there are varying opinions on this issue. There are certainly some stakeholders saying we should take 1.9% from employees and 1.9% from employers from these defined benefit plans like HOOPP and OMERS, and move that into the ORPP, so it would be a universal plan. But I think that at the end of the day, that would result in reduced benefits on a monthly basis for people who are now in a secure pension plan. I think the goal here is to ensure some pension security for all, not to reduce the pension security of people who currently have a secure pension and have the ability to continue to spend in their communities and spur on the economy.

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to speak to somebody who is somewhat of an expert in the pension field. He talked to me about the existing public sector defined benefit plans like HOOPP, OMERS, OPSEU Pension Trust and Teachers', and about how these pensions are administered. They're administered under a joint administrative system. I would hope there would be something similar set up under the ORPP. Under those plans, you have workers, you have employers and you have unions all sitting on the pension board. It's that group that actually makes the decisions on how the pension benefits will be improved in the coming years.

Something I didn't know was that under defined benefit plans, actually 70% of the benefits provided to retirees come from investments and not contributions. I think it's important to note that, because if there is any move to reduce the amount of contributions by that 3.8%, there will be less dollars to be invested, so the end result

will be a negative outcome for the people who are expecting their pensions to be secure.

Just to wrap up in my last three minutes, the point I'm trying to make is that we need to do this right. This is a very complex issue, with all different kinds of pension plans across this province, be it defined benefit, defined contribution, voluntary or mandatory RRSPs, or just your own personal RRSP, and we have some time.

I'm glad to see that our priority is to ensure that the hard-working families in this province are the priority and that building the legislative infrastructure will ensure that our seniors and their families can retire in dignity. As it stands, not enough can, and too many are left struggling to pay for their household needs like housing, food and spiralling hydroelectric bills, and are forced to work well into their later years to make ends meet.

Just last week, I was speaking to a nurse in my riding who hadn't contributed to the pension plan, although she had worked in the Niagara Health System for 30-some years. I asked her when she was going to retire, and she said, "Not until I'm at least 65, because I didn't contribute to my pension plan, and now I don't have enough money to retire. So I'm going to have to stay and work it out till the end." So it's important that we encourage people to contribute to pension plans.

We've seen this government waste billions of dollars on scandal after scandal because of reckless approaches around a number of issues: P3s, for example, \$8 billion; privatizing and contracting out services; wasting money on eHealth; a couple of billion dollars on the Ornge scandal; gas plants; Presto—you name it, and there has been a huge waste of money. I think that is because you don't do the work up front. You pass the legislation, you pass the policy, and then you try to figure it out later.

1630

I think this is a good opportunity; with this bill coming in three pieces, we're going to have lots of time to actually talk about it. I hope that every member of this House brings their story here to the Legislature so that we can work out all of the wrinkles in advance.

My last parting thought is, we have a number of well-established pension plans here in this province. Has the government given any thought to letting those pension plans actually administer this new ORPP? They're the ones, some of them with fully funded pension plans, who have the expertise. Why would we be going out and putting together a new management system for this plan when we have many experts in this field who have been in the pension business for many, many years? I urge you to turn your mind to perhaps seeking them out.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'm delighted to rise and speak for the two minutes that I have.

About 25 years ago, I was the Minister of Financial Institutions. One of the things that we dealt with was the pension plan. There was a defined benefit plan and a defined contribution plan, and most people had no idea what the difference was. A defined benefit plans states

that when you retire, you will get an amount of money that is known to you. It tells you right in your plan that this is what you're going to get. If you have a defined contribution plan, it means you put the money in, it is managed, and whatever it yields, you get. If it isn't managed properly, you don't get a lot of money. If it's managed properly, you get a lot more.

One of the big problems is that, at the present time, only 35% of people in the workforce have a pension, whether it be a defined benefit or a defined contribution. When you talk to young people who are working, they say, "I'm not going to worry about that now. That's way off into the future. I'll worry about it then." Well, if you don't worry about it now, that money is not going to be there in the future because there's always some other priority. It's absolutely critical.

I have constituents come into my office and they tell me they've got a Canada Pension Plan and what they get is about \$12,500 a year. Now, I can tell you that anyone who retires and that's the only income that they have, is really in very, very bad shape. The Premier has approached the federal government to suggest that the easiest way to do it would be to augment the Canada Pension Plan. There was a straight refusal to do that. There was no interest in doing that. She felt that she really had to go forward and bring forward this particular plan. As we work through it, there's going to be things that have to be adjusted, but I think it is absolutely imperative that we take the responsibility to make sure that people will have that income when they retire.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to commend the member from Welland for her comments. I was listening intently. She mentioned dwindling jobs—I'm quoting her—and that we have a saving crisis. She's right; we do have a crisis. You could say it's a saving crisis and you could even say it would be certainly nice if everybody had a great pension, but the reality is that the best saving for your retirement is a good job. The best way to save for your retirement is to manage your money. As the member from York Centre said, that money has to be managed properly. I think we have to start educating the public about debt, about taking on too big a mortgage, about saving for their retirement. Who better to show them than us, the people in this Legislature right here, right now?

The member from Welland also mentioned the billions of dollars in waste that we've seen from this government over the last decade. That is not setting an example. I think that too many young families in this province did not even have parents who grew up in the Depression; it was their grandparents. Those of us with parents who grew up in the Depression were constantly being told, "You have to save. You have to put away. Don't take on too much debt. Pay that credit card balance every month. Don't shop until you have that balance back down to zero."

It's imperative that we set an example, that we ensure that the crisis ends for the economics of the province. It's

not just a crisis in retirement; it's a crisis of economics; it's a crisis of deficit; it's a crisis of—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timmins–James Bay, would you please come to order?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Exactly. I hope that they're saving.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I'm pleased to have a quick two minutes to add my voice again to this debate.

I thank my colleague from Welland for her thoughtful comments. To some of her points about comparability and portability: These are important issues, not just details, that need to be considered very carefully. As I said yesterday, we're glad that the government is taking counsel and taking the advice, hopefully, of the people that they're consulting with and that we see what these details are as this process unfolds over the next pieces of legislation and that those decisions are not made just in regulations. We want to know what this will look like before that stage.

Today my colleague presented Bill 64, protecting unpaid interns. We're hearing about the economic realities of our students and of the next generation of workers, those individuals who should be working, who should be able to start making plans for their future. There are just so many layers to consider, and I think that was an important piece that does connect to the pension puzzle.

As far as managing your money and learning how best to save or to pay off debt before you take on more debt, these are great ideas, and these are things that people should learn. As I said yesterday, I come from an education background, and I know the value of teaching strategies and skills. I think we need to not only set an example here, but we need to recognize the realities outside of this Legislature: that people could teach us about managing money; that they are stretching a dollar much further than many of us have ever had to consider. I think they can educate us about how to move ahead and how best to design this pension plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I did enjoy what I thought was a very thoughtful, articulate and common-sense speech from the member for Welland.

It's interesting. As I was consulting last Saturday, I was with my friends at the East City Coffee Shop in Peterborough, where you can still get a great western sandwich for \$4.50. You throw a 50-cent tip in, so you give Mr. Sina five bucks, which is good. The topic of conversation there was the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Based on the consensus at the East City Coffee Shop, which is on Hunter Street East in Peterborough, right near the lift lock—great spot—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member for Hamilton Mountain come to order?

Hon. Jeff Leal: What they said there is that they're in favour of this, and I'm glad to see the member for Welland is on board.

If you want to roll back the clock, 51 years ago, when the Prime Minister of the day, the father of the Canadian flag, the great Lester Pearson, introduced the Canada Pension Plan bill in the House of Commons, the tired rhetoric that we hear from the loyal opposition was the same rhetoric that John Diefenbaker, George Hees and that whole gang had against the Canada Pension Plan. So it's the same old story that we're hearing from them: that it's going to kill jobs.

Mr. Speaker, this is about planning for the future. The member from Welland and the third party have got it right. They're going to support this. This is an investment in the people of the province of Ontario and something we need to do.

The negativity—as I said, they should get the speeches from the House of Commons. It's great reading. I did it over the holidays. Fifty-one years ago—the tired rhetoric. You can take the member from Oxford and the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and replace them with the Tories who were in Ottawa representing the same ridings 51 years ago. The stories were exactly the same: doom and gloom.

1640

I say to my friends across now that they should give back the Canada pension if they don't think it's a good idea for Ontario, because it's great for Ontario, as this pension plan will be for all Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I go back to the member from Welland. You have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I say to the minister of culture and rural affairs—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Culture? Food.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Food and rural affairs. Food and—anyway, whatever it is, don't be using my time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, come to order.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I say, a good advertisement today, and where can I buy some cheap tires in Peterborough?

The members from York Centre, Thornhill and Oshawa, thank you for your comments. The private investing market has not been great over the last 20 years. People haven't done that well investing their money in the market; right?

I agree with the member from York Centre: The CPP federally is the best option. Good jobs are important; however, we don't have any. I think people who are in debt know best how they got into debt, and many of them got into debt because they lost their jobs, and in order to not lose their house and everything else they had, they had to take on credit card debt, like the guy I talked about today. He uses seven different credit cards just to get through his month to subsidize his paltry ODSP payment. It's like the school of hard knocks over here from the Conservatives.

We certainly are going to be supporting a pension plan. We want it to be, though, the right pension plan, a defined benefit plan that people can count on and be secure in in their futures.

In closing, I'll just say that I'm glad to see that the government is actually doing something for Ontarians other than creating another scandal.

Miss Monique Taylor: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I believe that we have unanimous consent that the House observe a minute of silence in condolence of the tragic death of a young three-year-old child, Elijah, who wandered from safety early this morning and unfortunately was found frozen, with no vital signs, in today's bitter cold.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member seeks unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence. Agreed? Agreed.

I would ask everyone to stand.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'm really pleased to have the opportunity to rise before this House and speak to this bill. I really do appreciate the comments that we've heard in the House today, in particular from the member from Welland, in support of a very important initiative.

Ontario is taking a very important step in helping millions of people to save for their retirement by introducing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014. I know this is a top priority of our government, and also a top priority for the people of Ontario.

The pension plan was at the centre of our election platform, and I know that in going door to door during the election, this was something that my community in Cambridge were really pleased to see our government take leadership on. Seniors, although aware that they wouldn't be benefiting from this particular plan, worry for their children and their grandchildren's retirement, and they were very happy to see it come in so that they knew in the future that their families would be looked after.

We've heard from the minister that in her conversations with people across the province, people are telling her that they're concerned about outliving their savings, and I certainly heard that in my work with my seniors as a care coordinator with the CCAC in the last few months before I was elected.

Fortunately, I was able to attend a meeting with the minister in my riding of Cambridge in December, where we had a variety of perspectives there at the table: small business, larger companies, labour activists—associations representing a wide variety of sectors. One participant in particular that I remember represented retired workers. Her first comment was, "I wish this bill had been passed yesterday. We really need this in Ontario, and I really see it benefiting seniors in the future." What I

took away from this meeting was that the status quo is no longer an option.

The minister and my colleagues have shared several statistics that demonstrate that people are not saving enough for retirement. Study after study shows that people are just not saving, for whatever reason. As was mentioned, in this week alone, both RBC and Sun Life Financial released polls showing that people are not saving enough and are worried about outliving their savings.

It's important to remind this House of the staggering numbers. According to an RBC poll, only 39% of respondents put money away for retirement during 2014. It also reported that 30% of respondents have not started saving at all, no matter how old they are. Sun Life Financial found that six out of 10 Canadians expect to be continuing to work after age 65, and for many, this wasn't a choice. They felt that they didn't have enough, or knew they didn't have enough, money to retire on. A friend of mine only half-jokingly often quips, "I'm working on Freedom 85."

I go back to the member from Welland's comments about health workers. Certainly during the 1990s, when there was a large layoff of nurses and health care workers, many of those either went on to different careers or had to switch what they were doing midstream. And many were out of a pension plan that they were able to participate in, because many of the health care workers in the 1990s and on into the early 2000s were part-time status and weren't able to participate in their workplace pension plan. As a health care worker myself, I see this over and over again, and it's not just nurses. It's many of the other health care workers on a part-time status.

I'm proud of this government, because not only have we hired 28,000 more nurses in the province of Ontario since 2003, but many of those jobs have switched to full-time rather than part-time status, and there are some workplaces that allow even part-time workers to participate in their workplace pension plan.

Mr. Speaker, these numbers are staggering, and they point to a major problem on the horizon, a problem that will only get worse in the face of inaction. Without action, we can expect to see Ontarians facing declining standards of living in retirement. This also threatens to slow our economic growth and consumption, because as we know, if people are forced to stretch their savings, they won't be out supporting the local economy. That's not something our government is willing to let happen. We know that Ontarians expect their government to take leadership to help secure their retirement, and that's precisely why I'm proud to be part of a government in which our leader said there is no discussion; we are moving forward in presenting the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

Recent polling suggests that 77% of Ontarians support an increase in pension benefits. Speaker, that is why our government is taking that action and the associate minister is working so tirelessly to build a made-in-Ontario pension plan. It's why this legislation is so critical,

because we need to look after our people. We need to make sure that nobody is left behind, and we need to make sure that seniors are going to be looked after in their retirement years after working so hard.

This legislation would help create a savings tool for the people of this province, designed to give more people a secure floor they can rely on. With the amount that is in the press, the coffee shop chat and folks I have seen in my constituency office and around my community, people are certainly worried about this, and it is certainly top of mind.

The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide a predictable stream of income paid for life. That's significant, because many are worried and often half-jokingly suggest that because their retirement savings plan is going to run out soon they want to not outlive that particular time. It's certainly a concern of our parents and our grandparents, and we don't want that for the future.

1650

This is an investment in our collective futures and a chance to give Ontarians the retirement security they deserve. Higher incomes amongst retirees mean more stable consumption in the future and decreased reliance on publicly funded social services. Several folks in discussions that I've had about whether they agreed or didn't agree with this particular plan have recognized that if we don't do something those pensioners who are not getting enough to live on are going to be a drain on our social services in the future because we do need to look after them. In turn, improved job and economic growth in the long term will be the result. When people feel more stable, they're able to retire in comfort. When we've got people who can go out and contribute to the local economy, that is good for our businesses.

As we move forward, our government has taken several steps to help our businesses plan for it. The minister has held several meetings with business representatives and associations to ensure that they're aware of the plan. We are providing over two years of lead time to allow businesses the time to adjust.

We are enrolling employers in stages beginning with the largest employers, so they do have lead time to make the changes necessary. We're also phasing in contributions over two years. This, again, assists our businesses in planning for the future.

The introduction will also coincide with expected reductions in employment insurance premiums, and certainly the businesses in Cambridge are hearing this message and will make the adjustments.

Speaker, I think that all members of the House can agree that retirement security is a key priority, something we should all be striving for not only for the parents that we're all looking after, but for our children and our grandchildren into the future. We believe that after a lifetime of contributing to our economy, working hard for those long hours to provide for our families and for our communities, Ontarians really do deserve the peace of mind of having a secure retirement. That's why we are asking members on all sides of the House to support Bill 56.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I am pleased to rise to speak on the member from Cambridge's comments. We are certainly in disagreement about the proposed retirement pension plan that the government is bringing forward.

I know she was a nurse also, as am I and as is—

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: There are four of us.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Yes, four of us in the Legislature.

I did pick up on one of her comments that you are hiring more nurses but I think, if you went to both ONA and RNAO sites, you're actually laying off nurses—just to clarify that one point.

I've certainly heard loud and clear—I know the member from Peterborough said that the people at the tire shop or the coffee shop were all in favour of the pension plan. I'm just across the border in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and, boy, I can't really find anybody who is saying, "Yay, we want this pension plan"—

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, I talk to everybody there.

All my chambers of commerce are very upset about this, vocally, getting their businesses to give the government hard proof, information replying to your pension plan consultation—so it's from them. I can see that some don't believe me over there on the government benches about what I'm hearing from my constituents.

It's going to cost jobs. The people who are lucky enough to actually have a job in my area right now are scared that they're going to lose that job because there is the tax on the employer of 1.9%. The employee—God love them—if they could put away money, are too busy paying their hydro bill. They're going to have another 2% knocked off their paycheque. Lots of those people can't afford it, and those who can afford it do have vehicles: registered retirement savings plans, tax-free savings accounts. There are vehicles. And when they do pass on, that actually goes to their loved ones in their will, whereas if they have to contribute to this plan by the government, where does that money they've actually saved go? It goes into those government coffers, which, I can argue, is very misspent at this point in time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First, my comments about the member from Cambridge's speech. There's no question that we have a pension crisis in Ontario. I don't believe that this bill will be adequate to solve that crisis, but I think the idea of a defined benefit pension plan that can complement the Canada Pension Plan makes sense. I think it's critical. I think our critic, Jennifer French from Oshawa, has said previously that whatever is designed, whatever comes forward, has to be compatible with CPP so that hopefully in the future, when the CPP is enlarged, there's the opportunity for Ontario to integrate its plan with the federal plan. That is the direction to go in.

The member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock: I disagree with you. I would say that your arguments are such that they could be used to oppose national

health care. They could be used to oppose the current Canada Pension Plan. They don't advance the needs of people in this province. I understand the reason you make the arguments—and you and I have been in the Legislature for a while; I have a lot of respect for the way you approach things—but I disagree with your analysis.

Back to the member from Cambridge: It's my hope that your government will have the resolve to hold on to the idea of a defined benefit pension plan, not a defined contribution plan, not to follow the Harper course of action, because frankly, that course of action means impoverishment for seniors for decades to come. If we're actually going to have pension plans that work for the vast majority of the population, we have to pool our resources. We have to put our money together. We have to get the best returns on our investments. That has been a critical part of what has succeeded in Canada for decades. It's my hope that the government won't yield to the pressure from the financial ministry to back off a defined benefit pension plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The Chair of Cabinet.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that you want me to remind people who are watching today that members of provincial Parliament do not have a defined benefit pension plan. Most people think that members of provincial Legislature have the same pension plan as the federal members of Parliament; they do not have it. The younger members, particularly, of the Legislature would want this kind of pension plan that is being brought forward by the government. They could participate like everybody else because they don't have a defined benefit pension plan, and we know the challenges that there are for people who don't have a defined benefit pension plan. I know that members wanted me to share that with others.

I enjoyed the speech by the member. I heard her name bandied about in the Legislature today. I want to say that I fully believe that the party had the right to do what they did in that particular case: to let John Tory run in her riding and to hire her for a job after that. There's nothing wrong with that. I really like Laurie Scott. She's a good member. But I heard people talking about that. I just want to make sure: I think that's fine, what they did in that case. It's similar, I guess, to what people are talking about in Sudbury, but I agree with that.

I was glad to hear that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm sorry; I have to interrupt this. The comments are supposed to relate back to the member for Cambridge, who actually gave the presentation. Questions and comments should relate back to the actual presentation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's right, and I thank the member for Cambridge for her very good speech.

She was replied to as well by the member for Toronto—Danforth. I was saying to him earlier today that I can remember when the NDP used to talk about policies and principles, and I really think that's good. I'm glad to hear them participating in this debate today instead of

scandal-mongering, as they have been for the last while. I was really pleased, because I thought his response to the member from Cambridge was quite an astute response on this important issue.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the opportunity to respond in the two minutes that we have.

I think the important thing for people to understand is that this pension discussion is based on, at its fundamental base, that you as an employee have an obligation to contribute 1.9% of your income into a defined contribution pension plan, and the employer has 1.9%. As people have looked at that and recognized what kind of money that represents, there has been quite a reaction, quite a pushback, particularly from people who would be affected. By that, I mean those who don't have the defined benefit pension that a public sector and major companies and people like that have.

The people who are actually going to feel this 1.9% come out of their pockets have suddenly realized that this is what the government is talking about. So, looking at that and the kind of balancing they have to do, employers have to really cover almost 4%, because the employee is having a paycheque deduction and he's having a payroll cut as well. As people begin to understand this, they are very concerned about their ability just to pay the bills now. It's also something we should remember, that not only is this government planning on this kind of cost to small business, but we know from the Minister of Climate Change that just around the corner, presto, another tax.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments, and I return to the member for Cambridge for her reply.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really do appreciate the comments from Toronto—Danforth, Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock and the member from Simcoe—sorry. Anyway, thank you very much for the comments.

I think what we're hearing around the House and around the province is this collective concern about our retirement savings. I would like to point out that the member from St. Catharines is certainly accurate: that we've talked about pensions in the House and yet we, as MPPs, do not have pensions. I'd like to correct the record for those at home as well who have suggested that because we have pensions, we shouldn't be dealing with them. But we don't.

But in saying that, I think that all of us here in the House today are being called by our communities to do something. We want to make sure that our families, our parents, our children and our grandchildren are looked after into retirement. Many, many workplaces do not have a pension plan that workers can contribute to, so having one that is essential for workers will make sure they are looked after into the future.

I certainly have talked about my young sons at home. They're getting the message at home that with their very

first paycheques, they should be putting 10% aside, and they've started to do that now. But they are also recognizing that they want to make sure that their own retirements are secure. I certainly hear from many constituents in my riding regarding this.

I'm very proud to be part of a government that's bringing forward the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, a made-in-Ontario pension plan, that will ensure the security of folks who are retiring after hard work into the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I appreciate very much this opportunity to speak in this House this afternoon on second reading of Bill 56, An Act to require the establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, standing in the name of the Associate Minister of Finance, who has been given responsibility for the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. I want to acknowledge that the minister is present in the House this afternoon, and those of us who are serving in the opposition appreciate the fact that the minister is here to listen to our comments and hear the concerns of our constituents.

I'm privileged to be here on behalf of the people of Wellington-Halton Hills and have very much appreciated their trust over the years and the opportunity to be here.

I think people tuning into the debate this afternoon would be puzzled to hear us talking about pensions when they have read in the newspaper in recent days about the various scandals of the government, the three police investigations that are ongoing: one with respect to the Ornge air ambulance debacle, another with respect to the gas plants cancellations and the deletion of emails that may have been illegal and, third, most recently, the Sudbury by-election and what happened in advance of that. The police investigations are ongoing. Those, I think, are amongst the biggest concerns of the people of Ontario.

Hon. David Zimmer: What does that have to do with pensions?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Actually, it has a lot to do with pensions, because these are the key issues and concerns of the people of Ontario right now with respect to what's going on in this place, and yet here we are, discussing Bill 56.

It is the government's prerogative to call the bill that's going to be debated this afternoon. The government House leader has called this for debate, but I have to put those concerns on the record. Obviously, we have serious concerns on this side of the House about those three police investigations that are ongoing.

I also need to point out the fiscal context in which this bill is being debated this afternoon, because we are leading up to a provincial budget. I had the opportunity to serve on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for a week with the member for Nipissing and a number of other members from the government side. We listened to public hearings.

Again, I think it's important to point out the fiscal context in which we debate legislation this afternoon. We

know that the projected deficit for the province of Ontario this year, the current fiscal year which ends at the end of March, is \$12.5 billion. At the same time, the government promises to balance the budget by 2017-18, before the next election. The deficit has actually gone up from \$10.5 billion last year to \$12.5 billion this year. When the deficit is going up, people are puzzled as to how the government would claim to be balancing the budget or making progress towards balancing the budget.

The projected provincial net debt is \$287.3 billion, and the government would congratulate itself that its net debt is somewhat less than the debt in Greece, but the fact is we're getting close to running out of fiscal room on that. In 2003, the debt was \$139 billion; now it's \$287.3 billion.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Arnott: These are the government's numbers, and it's eliciting a bit of a response from the government side. But I take these numbers from the fiscal outlook, the fall economic statement, that the government presented in the House before Christmas.

We see this year that provincial government spending is \$130.2 billion, up from \$126.4 billion last year. Again, the government says they're working towards a balanced budget, and they would lead us to believe they're making progress towards a balanced budget, but in fact, spending year over year continues to go up and up and up.

The net per capita debt, in effect the amount that each Ontarian owes because of years of overspending by provincial governments going back to Confederation, the amount that every man, woman or child in Ontario would owe if the debt were to be paid back, is \$21,003 this year, up from \$11,339 in 2003—almost an increase of 100% since this Liberal government took office.

Interest payments on the debt this year are expected to be \$10.8 billion. This is the third-largest line item in the budget and the fastest-growing line item in the budget. By 2017-18, it is expected that \$13.9 billion will be what the government will have to spend to service the debt.

All of these concerns need to be put on the record. The people need to understand the fiscal position of this government. I'm afraid that this particular government would like people not to understand the severity of the debt problem and the financial problem that we face in the province of Ontario. They would like to downplay it. I think it's incumbent upon the opposition to continue to remind the people about the situation that we're in and what's going to have to be done to alleviate the challenge that we face.

With respect to Bill 56, I have reviewed the presentation that was made in the House by the minister leading off the debate on second reading. I must say, it was an interesting speech. I would have to say, though, that she understated the concern that exists amongst the business community articulated by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and their many individual members who are very, very concerned about this and what it means.

When I talk to individual small business people in my riding, many of them tell me that they have already put off plans to hire more people because they know this is coming. They know that it's going to be a deduction off their bottom line, irrespective of whether or not they're making a profit, and that's a serious concern. They're just struggling to survive over the next few months and years, let alone looking at this big new increase in costs that will actually lead them to hire fewer people or to try to find ways to reduce their payroll costs.

1710

We're in the context of an unemployment situation in the province of Ontario that's around 7%, and it has been at an unacceptably high level going back to 2008, when the recession hit. We now have had, I think, almost six years where our unemployment rate has been higher than the national average in the country. This should concern all of us—I would think that it should concern the government in particular, but all of us in the province of Ontario—about how we're going to ensure that we get back to a level of employment that is acceptable; that there are job opportunities, particularly for our young people; and that the opportunities exist across the province, not just in a few communities or in a few sectors of the economy. I don't think the government seems to fully appreciate that fact, based on the policy agenda that it's pursuing.

I've received many emails from constituents, most of whom either own or are involved in small business. They ask me about the Ontario pension plan, and what my position is. What I tell them is, I agree with them that the province is going in the wrong direction under the Liberals, and I share their concerns about the Ontario pension plan.

I understand and would acknowledge that there are a great many people in the province of Ontario who are concerned about whether or not they're going to have enough set aside to provide for their retirement—there's no question about that—especially people who are in their fifties and sixties, who are close to retirement age. If they haven't made retirement savings plan contributions over the years, and they look at their statements, perhaps they are concerned, wondering whether or not they're going to have enough money to retire. I understand that, and I realize that that concern exists.

But the question is, are those people going to benefit under Bill 56, if it's passed, and if the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is actually brought into effect? We know, even from what the government is saying, to achieve the full benefit of the plan, people are going to have to make contributions and work for something like 40 years to receive something like \$12,000 a year by way of a benefit under the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. People who are in their late fifties or early sixties, wondering if they have enough to retire, hear that the provincial government is bringing in a retirement pension plan; of course they think that might be good news. But the fact is, those people who are most anxious about retirement right now, because they're close to it and perhaps haven't

saved enough for the lifestyle that they would hope to have, are not going to benefit. The government knows that, and yet they continue to try to exploit the fears of some of these unfortunate people and try to generate political support based on their anxiety and their concern. Mr. Speaker, I think that is regrettable.

I also would add that this retirement pension plan will reduce take-home pay for workers. In many cases, we've seen some credible economists like Jack Mintz say that people who theoretically would want to receive a benefit from a pension plan like this are not going to be helped; lower-income workers are going to get shafted in this arrangement. They're not going to get a retirement benefit that they would hope to get. In some cases, because an additional retirement pension plan benefit might be forthcoming to them from the province of Ontario, it would reduce their guaranteed income supplement, and they may not be net winners in the process.

In the short term, of course, it reduces take-home pay for workers by 1.9%, as soon as it comes into effect. The fact is, a vast majority of people who are working today in low- and medium-income jobs are struggling to make ends meet as it is. They're living paycheque to paycheque, and to reduce their take-home income at this time, they are going to feel it, and it is going to be causing immediate short-term hardship for them. There's no question about that.

We believe that bringing this in at this time will cost jobs. I've already talked about that briefly. We hear that from the business owners and the business organizations like the CFIB and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and other business groups. We heard that from the hotel and motel association—a very passionate presentation at the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs about the negative impact that this is going to have for their industry. I would commend them, and recommend to each member of the House that they should read the presentation that was made at the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs by the hotel and motel association discussing this particular issue.

We believe that this bill would create a duplicated bureaucracy. There already is the Canada Pension Plan, as we know, but to create a provincial bureaucracy to administer pension funds is probably complete, absolute duplication, and we would question that part of this bill in this approach.

A better solution, I would suggest, would be to enhance the CPP when it is affordable to do so. We used to hear from this particular Liberal government that they hoped that the Liberals would be elected in the House of Commons in the next federal election, that they would look to the Liberal Party federally to enhance the CPP. If that's still their position, why are they bringing forward enabling legislation at this time in advance of the election? I haven't really had clarification on that. But I think that when the time comes, when the economy is in a stronger financial position and over time because of inflation, it would be reasonable to look at the amounts

with respect to CPP. But at the same time, now is not the time to enhance the CPP, and I think that the federal government is right to say no at this time until the economy is stronger and the economy is on a more stable financial basis.

I think we also need to do more to encourage the awareness of voluntary pooled registered pension plans. My colleague the member for York–Simcoe has talked about that for years in this place, and she has promoted that idea for a long, long time. I know the government has finally taken tentative steps to introduce legislation in that regard. But at the same time, that is another option that people need to know about. I have written numerous letters to the minister, to the Premier on this issue and emails in response to constituents' concerns, and I will continue to do so.

Bill 56, we know, is intended to establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. If Bill 56 is passed, the government would be required to establish this plan no later than January 1, 2017, not yet two years away, coincidentally just before a provincial election is expected in 2018. "The Minister of Finance or another member of the executive council must introduce legislation that provides for the operation of the plan, the administration and investment management of the plan through an administrative entity, and the basic requirements of the plan, including those set out in the schedule to the act." Of course, this is preliminary legislation—enabling legislation it has been said—to provide for the establishment of the plan. But there would have to be more legislation to come if indeed this bill passes and if indeed the government decides to proceed in the end.

There is a provision for the creation of an administrative entity, it's called. The administrative entity "must be established for the purpose of administering the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan," and the "duties are specified in subsection 2(2) of the act."

The collection of information is an important provision of this legislation. "The Minister of Finance is authorized to request and collect specified information, including personal information, from employers, public bodies and the federal government for the purpose of establishing the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan" because, as it stands now, the government doesn't have the power to get this private information from employers or from individuals and it would seek to acquire that power through the passage of Bill 56.

The basic requirements of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan: The schedule sets out the basic requirements of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, including "contributions to the plan, eligibility of employees and employers under the plan, payment of retirement benefits and survivor benefits, and compliance and enforcement."

The biggest concern that I think many of us have in this House—aside from the timing of this legislation, the economic cost to employers and employees at this time and the fact that the vast majority of the people who are most concerned and most anxious about their retirement in the province today, who will not actually benefit at all

from this legislation, and some of them will hardly benefit—is, what is going to be done with the money?

My colleague the member for York–Simcoe was very helpful in terms of the discussion on this bill in the conclusion of her first opportunity to speak to this bill this week. She quoted from the provincial budget of 2014, and I think it's important that this is repeated. This is in the budget from 2014: "By unlocking value from its assets and encouraging more Ontarians to save through a proposed new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, new pools of capital would be available for Ontario-based projects such as building roads, bridges and new transit. Our strong Alternative Financing and Procurement model, run by Infrastructure Ontario, will allow for the efficient deployment of this capital in job-creating projects."

With this statement in the budget, we now understand, I think, how the money is going to be spent. The government says it's going to be an arm's-length administrative entity that's going to invest this money, but it doesn't say in Bill 56 that the investments will be put to projects for the highest possible benefit for the pensioners.

1720

Canada Pension Plan legislation, as far as I understand it, requires the managers of the pension plan to seek the highest possible return. That's not what Bill 56 says, and I think it's pretty clear from this statement in budget 2014 that the government plans to take this money and spend it on their infrastructure priorities. That may be good for the projects and the communities where the money is invested. In some cases there obviously may be some projects that would be expedited under this proposal, but to suggest that the pensioners' money is being put into an account that's going to be there for future pensioners, is going to be set aside, is going to be invested perhaps in the stock market or bonds or various investments, like the Canada Pension Plan is, and to suggest and imply that that money is going to be invested for the future, for the benefit of the pensioners—actually, that money, apparently, is going to be spent on infrastructure projects.

That gives me a segue, I think, to talk about some of the infrastructure needs in my riding.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Highway 6.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The Chair of Cabinet knows of the need for the Morriston bypass, Highway 6 south of Guelph. I have talked about this in the House many, many times and even this morning I had an opportunity once again to remind the Minister of Transportation of the importance of this project and getting it on the five-year plan of the ministry for new construction, the southern highways plan.

This is an important priority that has been identified by the township of Puslinch council, the county of Wellington and a significant and growing industry group involving companies and partners like Con Cast Pipe, Sleeman, Guelph Chamber of Commerce, Canada Bread, the Private Motor Truck Council of Canada, Nestlé Waters, Tim Hortons, Maple Leaf, the Freight Manage-

ment Association of Canada, Fluke Transportation, the Grain Farmers of Ontario, the Hamilton Port Authority, the city of Hamilton, the Hamilton International Airport, the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, Cargill, as I said, the county of Wellington, the Ontario Trucking Association, the Southern Ontario Gateway Council, as I said earlier, the township of Puslinch, and the city of Guelph. All of these partners have come together to form the Morriston Bypass Coalition to urge the government to get this project on the five-year plan.

I have asked the minister repeatedly, and I gather there's some consensus in the House that may be now emerging. Some of the government ministers appear to understand the importance of the project. I would urge the minister to do the right thing and put this project on the five-year plan of the ministry and build the Morriston bypass.

We talked many times and will again next week, because the ROMA-Good Roads conference is under way, of the damage that the arbitrary cancellation of the Connecting Link Program has caused. I know the Minister of Agriculture and Food knows about this too. The cancellation of the Connecting Link Program has been absolutely devastating for a significant number of municipalities in ridings across the province. And I use a couple of examples: The township of Centre Wellington had planned to build the St. David Street bridge, Highway 6 through Fergus. It formerly would have been expected to be a Connecting Link project until the legs were cut out from under the municipality with the cancellation of the program. There needs to be a superstructure replacement and semi-integral abutment conversion of that bridge in downtown Fergus. The cost is anticipated at \$2.6 million—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hope you're going to tie this into the bill.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Well, of course. The government, in its budget, Mr. Speaker, said they planned to bring in Bill 56 to create the retirement pension plan so that they could pay for these infrastructure projects. I think it's important for me to point out some of those infrastructure needs, although I am running out of time, unfortunately, and I have others.

I will continue to advocate for the infrastructure needs in my riding as long as the government is spending billions of dollars on infrastructure.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Cambridge on a point of order.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: A point of order, Speaker: I just wanted to correct my record that the member I was referring to last in my speech was the member from York-Simcoe. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A member is always allowed to correct the record.

Questions and comments? The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming-Cochrane.

I would like to follow the comments from the member from Wellington-Halton Hills. I always listen very intently to his comments. I have to say that on a lot of his pension comments I disagree totally, but I appreciate the time he put in to describe his points.

The NDP were fully in favour of a public pension plan. The issue is, we don't think that the Liberals can pull this off. I'm going to be very frank about that, and I'll give an example of another great plan that was supposed to and that they claim does great things. That is the Green Energy Act.

How am I going to tie this in? I have a solar farm in my riding which was supposed to create all these jobs. Jobs are great for pensions. Right? So the company got the contract, the FIT contract. TransCanada PipeLines bought the project for \$60 million, but the people who built it didn't get paid. Now, how is that for your pension plan? And that came directly from the Green Energy Act that was supposed to create all these jobs, and jobs fix people's pensions.

Even worse, in the town next door, a little town called Latchford, a beautiful little town, they don't have access to natural gas and the government says they're working on that. These people have to heat their houses with propane or electricity. A lot of people in Latchford are getting older, so they heat with electricity. Again, they can't pay their electrical bills. They own their houses. Their electric bills are so high that if they don't have a pension, they're forced out of their houses. There's more to this plan than just saying you're going to create a pension plan. You have to manage the economy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm happy to add a few points to the discussion.

First, let me say something about the obvious need for the Ontario pension plan. Certainly in my riding, I hear from constituent after constituent, Friday after Friday, email after email, phone call after phone call. They are 100% supportive of this plan.

I know in my conversations and briefings from Associate Minister Hunter, who's the minister responsible, that in her travels and consultations across Ontario she's getting the same response from people across Ontario. They need this plan; they want this plan.

Having said that, our preference was, and always has been, to have the federal government, the federal Conservative Party, top up the CPP but, for whatever reason, they've crawled into a groundhog hole on this one and won't touch it. They are not interested in the larger welfare of the majority of Ontarians and Canadians. I welcome the support of the NDP for this initiative.

I just want to remind viewers that when you read through the legislation, there are three core elements to the plan:

(1) It requires equal contributions from employees and employers that are capped at 1.9% on employees' annual earnings up to \$90,000.

(2) Those contributions will be invested by an organization at arm's length from the government.

(3) The benefits will be indexed to inflation to provide a predictable source of retirement income for life.

A predictable source of retirement income: That's the key to the attraction among my constituents and broadly across the board in Ontario. It's that predictable income so that people can retire with dignity.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to say that the member from Wellington–Halton Hills really hit the nail on the head. I think that's what we're really afraid of on this side of the House, that somehow this pool of money is going to be used by the government for infrastructure projects at low yields instead of investing in the highest yield possible, because a pension is only worth how the investment grows.

The member opposite who just spoke said that people want a guaranteed income in their retirement. Of course, they want a guaranteed income in their retirement, but people also want a guaranteed job with a guaranteed income during their time. More and more, we're hearing from business owners that this is actually going to take jobs out of the province. We're going to have higher unemployment rates, and those people who are unemployed are not going to be part of this pension.

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I think that as a province, we really do have to focus on the economy. We have to focus on cutting red tape, on creating more jobs, on cutting down the deficit and on cutting down the debt. Yes, as the member from Wellington–Halton Hills said, when Ontario shows that it can be the leader of the economy once again, maybe our federal counterparts will be willing to discuss a simplified pension scheme, one pension working together that is topped up by Ontario, as opposed to two separate pensions and somehow trusting this government not to raid the piggy bank in order to fund projects because they don't have the revenue stream because of the high debt cost.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills for his comments, some of which I agree with and some of which I don't, but it's always good to hear three sides to the story.

I'm glad, though, that you raised the issue of the clawbacks, the issue of the guaranteed income supplement and of GAINS clawed back. A lot of people don't know that there could be a clawback of 50 cents on every dollar of GIS under the current rules. I frankly don't know about GAINS; if it's a 100% clawback or something less. This is the very lowest incomes in this province that get guaranteed income federally and provincially. Really, there's no point in people actually investing 1.9% of their income if, at the end of the day, they're going to have it clawed back. It reminds me of the ODSP scheme where we gave ODSP recipients a 1% increase and a promise of

no clawback on their first \$200 of income, but then we brought forth a policy that is actually going to take away \$100 a month of employment income from those people on ODSP who want to go to work. It's kind of like give it to me in this hand and claw it back in this hand.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane made a good point about government boondoggles, and we certainly don't want this one to turn into another one of those boondoggles that the Liberal government so frequently makes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills, you have two minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to express appreciation to the members who responded to my comments this afternoon on this bill.

But again, I would refer to the speech from the member for York–Simcoe, who is our critic on this. She pointed out that the objectives of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board are, in fact, included in the federal legislation with respect to the CPP. It says that the requirements and the objectives of the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board are:

“(a) to assist the Canada Pension Plan in meeting its obligations to contributors and beneficiaries....

“(b) to manage any amounts transferred to it ... in the best interests of the contributors and beneficiaries”—the best interests—and

“(c) to invest its assets with a view to achieving a maximum rate of return, without undue risk of loss, having regard to the factors that may affect the funding of the Canada Pension Plan and the ability of the Canada Pension Plan to meet its financial obligations on any given business day.”

Again, the enabling legislation for the CPP compels the investment board to seek the maximum possible return in the best interests of the pensioners.

Contrast that with the wording in Bill 56 under “Obligation to create administrative entity”:

“3. Investing contributions: The administrative entity shall be responsible for investing the collected contributions for the benefit of the members and other beneficiaries of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.”

The CPP requires the investment people at the CPP to seek the highest possible return. The provision in Bill 56 to establish the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan doesn't speak to the best interests or the highest possible return. That's why we believe the government has the intention and the plan to take that pension money and spend it on infrastructure, and will not be seeking the highest possible return in the best interests of the pensioners. That's a big issue for us. We need to hear more from the government to get this clarified. But, certainly, our caucus is very concerned about this bill, and we will be speaking against it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm grateful to have the opportunity to speak today about the proposed Ontario

Retirement Pension Plan. I hear constantly from my constituents, who are worried about what their future holds for them as they are getting older. I hear it from seniors, I hear it from those who are nearing the retirement age, but I'm also hearing it from younger workers, and that, I think, is a bit of a change from a number of years ago, when many people didn't think about their retirement income when they were young.

But that's still true for many people who are in their twenties, thirties and even early forties—pensions are not on the top of their minds. Increasingly, people are worried about whether or not they will be able to enjoy their retirement when it comes. Many, in fact, just don't believe that it will ever happen.

Yesterday morning, there was a report on the radio that a study found that more than 50% of Canadian workers expected to still be working at the age of 66. Today, we know many people who will continue to work well beyond their retirement, simply because they can't afford not to work.

In 1926, Canada's Prime Minister Mackenzie King was on shaky ground, and J.S. Woodsworth, the leader of the NDP's forerunner, the CCF, saw an opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of working Canadians. Woodsworth offered King his support in return for a promise to enact a national old-age pension plan. The next year, the Old Age Pensions Act came into force, funded from general revenue. This act would ensure that seniors would not be left to live in poverty.

That was a great step forward, but it wasn't enough. In 1965, with Tommy Douglas holding the balance of power in Ottawa, the Canada Pension Plan was introduced, a plan that was self-financed through the contributions of Canadians and their employers. Today, the Canada Pension Plan is the most efficient pension plan in the country, but efficiency only gets you so far. The maximum amount you can receive from the CPP in 2015 is just over \$1,000 a month—and that's the maximum. The average for new beneficiaries is just about \$610. When you add Old Age Security and the guaranteed income supplement, many would still fall below \$20,000 a year, and that's it. Any of us in here can do the math, and we know that it's quite clear that, under those circumstances, you cannot come close to living the life you had when you were working.

Consider the expenses that they have. Rent alone, for example, could easily eat up more than half of that; or maybe even an outstanding mortgage or municipal taxes that are several hundred dollars; a telephone; and, of course, the ever-increasing cost of hydro—these are just some of the major monthly payments, but we hear more and more about seniors paying serious attention to the cost of food being controlled; the lack of a healthy diet simply means more costs on our health care system.

A recent economic impact study on US Steel was done by the city of Hamilton, and I have a few notes on that. It says:

“Reduced retirement income is associated with heart-related death in both men and women...;

“Seniors who are not accustomed to seeking out services may not be aware of services available to them...; and

“Stress can lead to many mental and physical health issues, the most serious being depression, heart disease and death.”

As we move forward, we must be aware of the broader implications for our seniors, for the services we provide and for our communities as a whole. The Canada Pension Plan, as it stands, just does not cut it, but that is where this pension crisis—and that's what it is, a crisis—should be getting addressed: through enhancements to the Canada Pension Plan. In the meantime, the reality is that Canadian retirees need to supplement the income they receive from the CPP with a workplace pension or their own personal savings.

For many, many years, the federal government has chosen to promote RRSPs rather than to make improvements to the CPP. As you know, it's that time of year—tax time—when we see our financial institutions spending a fortune to encourage us to buy RRSPs, and there are still a few days left to do just that. But despite the hype from the banks and the tax incentives offered to encourage people to put their money into RRSPs, it doesn't seem to be working.

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Statistics Canada says only about 24% of eligible tax filers contribute to RRSPs. Although the maximum you can contribute to an RRSP is 18% of your income, the average contribution in 2013 was just over \$3,000.

Then there's the unused amount eligible to be put into an RRSP. You know the little box at the bottom line of the assessment where you file your taxes? It says “RRSP contribution limit” for next year's taxes. When you add those up for everyone in Canada, you get an incredible \$500 billion, and that was expected to double in the next three years. That's right: \$500 billion of room allowable in RRSP contributions. Certainly for many, they can't afford to put any more, but last year, two thirds of people said they wanted to contribute more and 35% said they could have contributed more.

So what about the other aspect of retirement income, workplace pensions? Well, what we're seeing is that they are becoming increasingly rare, and those that do exist are becoming more vulnerable. For starters, two thirds of Ontarians do not have a current workplace pension. Of those who do, many companies now offer defined contribution plans rather than defined benefit plans—basically an RRSP, the value of which is unpredictable, especially if the market goes the way it did a few years back.

Then there are the serious concerns about the commitment of companies to fulfill those obligations. In Hamilton, we particularly hear from thousands of people who have based their retirement plans on income they understood they would receive from their pension plans that they paid into for years, and I want to spend a little time talking about this, Speaker.

For decades, workers at Stelco negotiated contracts with their employer, and as part of those contracts, some

were to believe that it was part of their contracts and their agreements that those wages would be deferred. Rather than receiving the money then and there, some of it would be put into a defined benefit pension plan that guaranteed a certain income when they retired. They felt safe in the knowledge that those pension benefits, along with their CPP benefits, would allow them to live out their lives in a relatively comfortable retirement for which they had worked for decades and which they certainly deserved.

Now they aren't so sure. They aren't sure what the future holds, because US Steel, the American company that was allowed to buy Stelco in 2007, are reneging on their responsibilities to live up to the agreements that they had made with their workers. Here's part of what a constituent wrote to me:

"I am again writing to you with my grave concerns about my pension, benefits (medical, dental, eye care, etc.) and insurance plans. I worked for 45 years to get where I am today and don't want to see the somewhat limited security that I have obtained over those years be taken away from me and my wife. I joined the pension plan as soon as I was allowed to and certainly don't want to have it reduced through no fault of my own.

"I am fully aware that I am just a very small senior citizen in the scheme of things and that I have no control over what others with money or powers can do to our standard of living and survival by taking necessities away from us. I know that there are people out there that want us seniors to disappear."

Speaker, it's hard to read that and not hear the despair of someone who has worked all their life. Unfortunately, the writer of this email is certainly not alone.

As part of the purchase agreement in 2007, US Steel agreed to assume pension obligations for four Stelco pension plans. Under an agreement with the province, the company funds the four pension plans. There's two salaried and two union, both with Hamilton Stelco and Nanticoke, so that's where the four came in. The deal with the province expires at the end of this year. After that, minimum funding requirements resume.

In 2012, an actuarial report on the US Steel plans found that, although the plans have \$2.5 billion in assets, they would be more than \$1.6 billion short of what they need if the company were to go bankrupt. As US Steel works to find a way out of their pension obligations, that is what these workers fear: bankruptcy of US Steel Canada brought on by their bosses south of the border.

Speaker, there are 15,000 workers and retirees covered by those pension plans. The largest group is approximately 8,000 retirees who are members of Steelworkers Local 1005. But I have also heard from some of the 5,000 salaried pensioners. In one of their information updates, Local 1005 laid the blame on the US Steel pension funding agreement at the door of the provincial government. That agreement came out of the CCAA restructuring and included the Ontario superintendent of pensions and the Minister of Finance when it was first drafted and then amended.

The Local 1005 newsletter reads as this: "They were the main bodies that tried to convince the workers that this pension funding agreement was in the best interests of pension plan members. At the end of the day, it is the Ontario government's responsibility to ensure that the pension funding agreement does ensure solvency funding of Local 1005's pension plan."

Salaried retirees are equally upset. Here's what they had to say about the situation at US Steel:

"When US Steel purchased Stelco in 2007, they assumed the pension and benefit liabilities and also convinced the federal and provincial government officials that the purchase 'would be good for Canada.' It sure has not been.

"Early in 2014, US Steel began a significant cost saving program, which included looking at pensions and benefits. During the summer of 2014, US Steel made US Steel Canada a stand-alone subsidiary and, along with a change in accounting practices, US Steel became unprofitable. Then in the fall of 2014, US Steel Canada went into CCAA," which is the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act.

The salaried retirees continued: "Until 1987, the pension plan was contributory and, along with Stelco, we paid into it with every paycheque. These contributions were deferred wages and now appear to be at risk. Continued health care benefits were also guaranteed and they too appear to be at risk at a time in pensioners' lives when those benefits are most needed."

That is part of the story of US Steel, formerly Stelco, and it gives you a sense of what those workers are going through. USW Local 1005 and the salaried retirees group are working hard to get their employees what they rightfully deserve and what is theirs. But make no mistake: There can be no doubt that they are not only deeply worried about what their future holds, but are also incensed at the treatment that they are receiving. In the words of my good friend Jake Lombardo of Local 1005: "Governments and the court should hold companies accountable for pension obligations which were agreed at the bargaining table. These are what you call deferred wages. It is criminal what they are doing to the people that put in 30, 40, or 50 years of hard work. You be the judge."

We all know the workers at US Steel are not alone in their fears. We remember, for example, the fate of Nortel workers and their retirement benefits when that company went bankrupt six years ago.

Pension benefits are being cut left, right and centre, and workers all across Ontario are being left to pay the price. It can be a complex array of situations where changes to pension benefits are intermingled with RRSps.

Here's what one constituent said in a letter he sent to former Premier Dalton McGuinty:

"I am a Stelco pensioner with over 36 years of service. I am extremely concerned regarding Stelco's bankruptcy protection and the effect it will have on my pension.

"I am holding the provincial government responsible for allowing Stelco to underfund my pension in the first

place. Secondly, the provincial government increased my RRSP pension adjustment amount based on a pension that I may not get. This increase reduced my yearly allowable RRSP contribution limit.

"As a result, every tax year my RRSP contributions were lower, my tax refunds were lower and my RRSP tax sheltered growth was lower. All this because of a pension I may not get. How do I ever make up for those losses if my pension is reduced?"

He concludes his letter with the following: "These pensions have been underfunded with the blessing of the provincial government. It is time for the provincial government to accept responsibility and act now to protect what is rightfully ours."

Twice, the NDP has introduced private members' bills brought forward by my colleague the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek in a bid to alleviate some of the suffering caused in these situations. The bills would have increased the monthly Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund from \$1,000 a month to \$2,500. If the government had allowed that bill to move forward and made it law, Hamilton's US Steel employees, and workers all across Ontario, would be feeling a heck of a lot better about their retirement. But that didn't happen.

So the crisis in pensions continues, and we, in the NDP, believe it's time for an Ontario public pension plan. We introduced a pension proposal back in 2010. It was similar to this plan in many ways, but there were some differences.

The Liberals opposed our plan at that time, but I am pleased that they are now on board, and I hope they continue to push it through. There will undoubtedly be some opposition to this, and we have heard some of it already. Some of that opposition will be lethal.

Banks and insurance companies will see this plan as competition for their plans that they currently promote

and sell. Perhaps ironically we can expect them to use some of the millions that they make from these products to attack these proposals—there's a fine example of your retirement dollars at work. But I urge the government to push forward.

I look forward to two other bills that will be required to put this plan in place—the deadline for that will be January 2017: One that will establish the arm's-length administrative body to handle benefits and asset management and one that will provide the details of the specific design of that plan.

With our aging population, it is critical that we come to terms with the future that we are facing. The defined benefit feature of the plan will help Ontarians plan for the future. Although the pensions received through the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will be modest, knowing exactly what they can expect to receive well in advance will help Ontarians to plan accordingly. It is predicted that a worker with 40 years in the plan earning \$45,000 a year will make an annual contribution of \$788 for a maximum annual payout of \$6,410. If you're earning \$70,000, the contribution would be \$1,263 for a payout of \$9,970.

This plan will certainly help with the serious pension challenges we are facing, but more needs to be done. I urge the government to push for a federal government that is committed to enhancing the Canada Pension Plan and to work with our federal NDP leader and the next Prime Minister of Canada, Tom Mulcair, to promote the plan that he is proposing to do just that. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1754.

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Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cindy Forster
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioic Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioic Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
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